



My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols
by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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On June 14th, we will commemorate the adoption of our country's flag with 13 stars and stripes to represent our nation and our founding colonies. With 50 stars in our current flag, our pride for our country stays strong.

Here are five things happening around your state this month:

1. Protecting Our Students

After the tragic shooting at Santa Fe High School, Governor Greg Abbott held multiple roundtable discussions which included survivors from the Santa Fe and Sutherland Springs shootings, lawmakers, community leaders, law enforcement, educators, as well as gun rights and gun control activists. The purpose of these discussions was to determine the most effective ways the State can help prevent future mass shootings. From these meetings, Governor Abbott has released a 40 strategy plan for preventing future school shootings.

These strategies include expanding the existing School Marshal Program, which allows school districts, private schools and junior colleges to appoint a school marshal for their schools. The school marshals must go through extensive training before serving. Other proposals include increasing mental health training, improving the infrastructure and design of Texas schools to reduce security threats, and raising the age at which parents are responsible when their children have access to loaded weapons. To read and learn more about this plan you can visit <https://gov.texas.gov/>.

2. Tax Amnesty Program

Comptroller Glenn Hegar has announced the Texas Tax Amnesty Program which is operating until June 29, 2018. All state and local taxes and fees the Comptroller's office administers are eligible. This does not include property taxes or sports and community venue taxes. The participants of this program are offered an opportunity to "wipe the slate clean" by filing past due reports, register for taxes that should have been reported or amend reports that may have underreported taxes, without paying penalties or interest. To find out more information about this program you can visit www.comptroller.texas.gov/tax-amnesty or call the Comptrollers office at 800-252-1390.

3. Sunset Hearing

Recently, the Texas Sunset Commission held a hearing to discuss reports regarding the Texas Military Department, Department of Public Safety, Department of Motor Vehicles, various finance agencies including the Texas Department of Banking and Finance Commission, as well as three of the river authorities in Texas.

The Commission, which is the only legislative body which votes on items during the interim, also voted on recommendations for agencies including the state's Behavioral Health Boards, Texas Veterans Commission and Texas Historical Commission. These recommendations will become bills and must pass during the upcoming legislative session to ensure these agencies are continued.

4. Nominations for Historical Awards

Texas history is full of men and women who accomplished great things for our state. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) continues to honor those who strive to preserve the history and heritage of Texas for future generations through their 2018 THC Preservation Awards. They are currently accepting nominations for 11 different awards ranging in areas from leadership, volunteerism, museums, archeology, and preserving history. You can find out more information about these awards at www.thc.texas.gov/awards and submissions are due **July 13, 2018**.

Winners will be presented with their awards at the THC's Real Places Conference in January 2019. If you know of someone who has made a contribution to preserving Texas history, I encourage you to nominate them.

5. Where to Visit in Texas

School is now out and many of you may be planning vacations for the summer. Texas is full of places to visit that can meet anyone's interest including beaches, arts and culture, food and drink, history, outside adventures and much more. I wanted to give you some tips on what you can do in our state. To start, you can visit the Texas Travel Guide online at www.traveltex.com, which is a compilation of attractions, events and places to stay all across the state, including your Texas State Capitol. I encourage you to visit your Senate District 3 office. If I am not there to greet you, my staff would be happy to meet with you.

If you are looking for more of an outdoor adventure, you can visit one of the four Texas state parks located in Senate District 3: Mission Tejas State Park (Houston County); Lake Livingston State Park (Polk County); Martin Dies, Jr. State Park (Jasper County); and Village Creek State Park (Hardin County). You can find more information about these and all state parks in the state by visiting <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/>.

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