



My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

For immediate release
April 25, 2024
word count: 746

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On April 21, 1836 the Battle of San Jacinto was fought and won by Sam Houston and the Texas army in a matter of minutes. Only nine Texans were killed while 630 Mexican soldiers died in the battle. Santa Anna was captured after the battle and with the victory, the Republic of Texas began.

Here are five things happening around your state:

1. East Texas law enforcement agencies receive grants

The Comptroller's office announced this month it has delivered nearly \$126 million in grants to rural law enforcement and prosecutor's offices as part of a program designed to provide additional support to these offices. That's about half of the total funding provided for the program by the Legislature last year. Over 500 qualified counties and prosecutor offices applied for the grant funding. The funding supports minimum salaries, raises, hiring additional staff, or purchases of safety equipment for rural sheriff, constable, and prosecutor's offices. Supporting rural law enforcement is imperative to ensuring public safety in every part of our state. I was proud to support this legislation and am thrilled that our communities have taken advantage of this opportunity.

2. Rural hospitals eligible for millions in broadband infrastructure grants

The Texas Rural Hospital Broadband Infrastructure Program is open to receive grants. The program, facilitated by the Texas Department of Agriculture, is designed to improve the connectivity of rural hospitals to meet the needs of the patients they serve. The funding will support general broadband network upgrades and improvement. Requirements include strict standards for broadband speeds, installation of wi-fi infrastructure and network equipment to provide free internet coverage in the hospital for use by patients and the public, and certification that any project will not duplicate any investment from other sources of funding. Applications are due by Midnight on May 2. For more information visit <https://texasagriculture.gov/Grants-Services/Grants-and-Services/Texas-Rural-Hospital-Broadband-Infrastructure-Program>.

3. Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program applications opening soon

Senator Nichols will soon be accepting applications for the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP). The program supports students to complete a college degree and become a member of either the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, United States Coast Guard, United States Merchant Marine, or a commissioned officer in any branch of the armed services of the United States. Each state senator may appoint one student to receive an initial conditional scholarship award. Awards will be the lesser of \$15,000 or an amount not to exceed a student's cost of attendance annually. Scholarship applicants must: submit an essay explaining why he/she believes military service is important, how he/she would fulfill the requirements of the scholarship and which university he/she would like to attend; submit a résumé, which must include his/her contact information, including his/her full name, mailing and physical addresses, Social Security number, Date of Birth, phone number and email address. Please submit up to 5 recommendation letters. Applicants may send application packets via email to Robert.Nichols@senate.texas.gov.

4. TWC awards grants to Southeast Texas schools

This month, Governor Abbott and the Texas Workforce Commission announced several Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grants totaling over \$2 million for Gulf Coast schools. JET grants support career and technical education training programs by helping schools purchase and install equipment to train students for high-demand occupations. The JET program helps support school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and public community, state, and technical colleges to create new or support existing CTE programs. Two of those grants are going to schools in SD 3, including:

- Lamar Institute of Technology – a \$343,340 grant to train 90 students as welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers.
- Tarkington ISD: a \$332,460 grant to train 145 students as welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers in partnership with Lone Star College System.

5. Charter Communications deploying broadband in East Texas

Charter Communications has been building out broadband infrastructure in East Texas over the past few years. The company won a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction award from the Federal Communications Commission which provides funding for the deployment of high-speed internet in rural areas. As of this month, Charter says they have served almost half of the locations they were awarded in East Texas through the RDOF process. Served locations are in Anderson, Hardin, Henderson, Jasper Jefferson, Newton, Orange, and Tyler Counties. Future projects are planned for Angelina, Cherokee, Houston, Nacogdoches, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, and Trinity Counties. Those counties should expect activations to start over the next year to year and a half. For more information, visit www.spectrumruralexpansion.com.

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