



# My five cents...

A weekly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

For immediate release  
May 1st, 2025  
word count: 758

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On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1718, San Antonio de Valero Misson was founded by Franciscan Antonio de San Buenaventura y Olivares near present-day San Antonio. It was one of the early efforts by Spanish missionaries to convert American tribes to Christianity. This mission would later become the Alamo.

Here are five things happening around your state:

## **1. Texas Parks and Wildlife acquires Wildlife Management Area in East Texas**

For the first time in nearly two decades Texas Parks and Wildlife acquired land in East Texas to establish the Trinity River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA is a 6,900 acre tract of land in Anderson County. This new addition is a part of the Middle Trinity River Ecosystem Project. The project protects more than 38,000 acres of land for conservation initiatives. The addition of 11.3 miles of the Trinity River gives TPWD 25 miles of riverbank to protect a significant migratory corridor for birds. Many species will benefit from the restoration projects including waterfowl, shorebirds, neotropical migratory birds, and butterflies.

## **2. Texas named best state for business**

For the 21<sup>st</sup> year in a row, Chief Executive Magazine has named Texas the best state for Business. This ranking is determined by an annual survey of CEOs across the nation. Texas has outpaced the nation in job growth over the past several months. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Texas Workforce Commission, in March, the state reached the largest workforce in state history at 15,778,500. The state's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a rate of 3.5 percent in the last quarter of 2024 while the U.S. average was only 2.4 percent growth. If Texas was a country, it would have the eighth-largest economy in the world.

## **3. HHSC says Texas hospitals spend \$122 million per month on healthcare for illegal immigrants**

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Governor Abbott issued Executive Order 46 which directed the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to collect reports from hospitals across the state for the cost of treating patients not lawfully present in the United States. Hospitals were directed to start collecting data on November 1, 2024 and were required to submit the first month of data on March

1, 2025. This week, HHSC released a letter to the Governor containing the results of the first month of data. In November 2024, individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States visited Texas hospitals more than 31,000 times with health care costs exceeding \$121 million. A break down of these costs is available on the HHSC website. The next submission of data to HHSC will contain data from December 2024 through February 2025 and will be submitted on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

#### **4. Jacksonville's Tomato Bowl voted #1 Texas High School Stadium**

The 2025 winner of Dave Campbell's Texas Football (DCTF) stadium bracket is the Jacksonville Tomato Bowl. Dave Campbell's Texas Football is a biannual magazine that covers all things Texas football from the Dallas Cowboys to the roughly 1,400 high school teams. This year over 130,000 votes were cast to determine the best stadium. The Tomato Bowl is a cultural staple of Jacksonville. First built in the 1930's, the stadium features an impressive wall around it made of rocks and stones from the area. Despite renovations in the last few years, the original wall still stands. The Jacksonville Tomato Bowl is one of the last downtown stadiums in the state. The stadium boasts unique traditions including lighting a flaming letter 'J' to start home games. I am a proud alum of Jacksonville High School and played many football games in the Tomato Bowl. Congratulations to Jacksonville High School on their well-deserved win!

#### **5. Five East Texans sign deals following NFL draft**

East Texas makes an impressive footprint on the National Football League this year following the 3-day NFL draft. Five East Texans signed deals in the draft and one player from Stephen F. Austin signed a deal following the draft. Kevin Rose of Henderson signed with the Jacksonville Jaguars following his time playing football at the University of Arkansas. Nash Jones, from Nacogdoches, signed with the Los Angeles Chargers, following his play at Texas State University. Moochie Dixon, from Carthage, and Elliot Davison, from Tyler Legacy, signed with the New Orleans Saints. Dixon played at Southern Methodist University and Davison played for the University of Texas- San Antonio. Jerrin Thompson, from Lufkin, signed with the Tennessee Titans, after finishing his college play at Auburn University. Bruce Harmon, a former SFA Lumberjack, signed a contract with the Dallas Cowboys.

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