

SPORTS

# United's dynamic sophomores

Treviño and Campero have Lady Longhorns off to hot start

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CRIME

# Gun trafficker sentenced to prison

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# Laredo Morning Times

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OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

# Smoking banned in public housing

By Julia Wallace  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Smoking will no longer be allowed in public housing under a new rule announced recently by the Obama administration.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development cited residents' health as a reason for the smoking ban, as well as a reduction of maintenance costs for public units.

"Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, healthy home free from harmful secondhand cigarette smoke," HUD Secretary Julian Castro said.

HUD has been advocating for smoke-free public housing since 2009. As of a year ago, 228,000 units were already smoke-free. This rule will affect the remaining 940,000 units across the country, including those in Laredo.

Julia Orduña, planning and community affairs specialist for Laredo's Housing Authority, said there are 938 public housing units spread across nine locations in Laredo. There are about 2,900 residents living in these units; about 1,400 are minors.

According to the County Health Rankings for 2016, 18 percent of Webb County adults are smokers, but it is not clear how many local public housing residents smoke.

Orduña said Wednesday's announcement will not become an official federal rule for at least 60 days, to allow for public comment. Then the housing authority will have 18 months to work on policy and be in accordance.

Once the rule is enacted, smoking will be banned within 25 feet of public housing and administrative offices.

The rule applies only to "tobacco products where the to-  
*Smoking continues on A12*

HIGHER EDUCATION

# Student enrollment up at LCC

## Dual enrollment boosts once dropping numbers

By Judith Rayo  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

LCC continues to get a boost in its enrollment from students who are still attending high schools.

Laredo Community College officials said student enrollment increased 5 percent from fall 2015 due to United Independent School District relocating its dual enrollment program to LCC. Dual enrollment is a way

for high school students to take a college course and receive simultaneous academic credit for the course from both the college and the high school.

For fall 2016, LCC reported an enrollment of 9,176, an increase of 427 students compared to fall 2015. That marks the second consecutive year that fall enrollment has increased at LCC. From fall 2014 to fall 2015, enrollment in-

creased 5.3 percent. Prior to that, enrollment had decreased for three consecutive years.

Also this fall semester, LCC recorded an increase in semester credit hours taken. That has not happened at LCC since 2010. Although enrollment increased from fall 2014 to fall 2015, the number of semester credit hours taken dipped from 72,812 to 70,344.

*LCC continues on A12*

BETHANY HOUSE

# HELPING THE HOMELESS

## Groups join forces to help those in need

By Andrea Castañeda  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

About 76 percent of the local homeless population are from Laredo, according to a point-in-time survey done by Laredo Homeless Coalition in January 2016.

National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week is held each year the week before Thanksgiving. Agencies in Laredo aid the homeless population throughout the year and join forces during the week to generate more awareness among the public.

The South Texas Food Bank distributed bags of food, personal care kits, blankets and dog food to Bethany House clients in support of the awareness week. It was the first year the food bank held the drive in conjunction with St. Augustine High School students with the support of Bethany House and  
*Homeless continues on A12*



Courtesy file photo

The South Texas Food Bank partnered up with St. Augustine High School to collect and distribute bags of food, personal care kits and blankets to Bethany House clients in support of National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week in Laredo on Nov. 15.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE

# Debate over schools, bathrooms may trump guns, pot

By Will Weissert  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas — Austin and Washington should be far more simpatico under soon-to-be Republican President Donald Trump than the White House's current occupant, but there's still room for potential

policy clashes when Texas' GOP-controlled Legislature heads back to work.

Immigration, schools, no-longer-so-flush state coffers and fights over which bathrooms transgender Texans can use will likely drive debate, while guns and marijuana

*Texas continues on A12*



David Williams / Bloomberg

The Texas State Capitol building stands in Austin, Texas, on June 2.

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## FROM THE COVER

## SMOKING

From page A1

bacco leaves are ignited, such as cigarettes, cigars and pipes," according to HUD. Electronic cigarettes seem to be OK, although HUD acknowledged their danger as well, and said they are seeking additional comments on the issue. Electronic cigarettes could end up being prohibited in the final rule.

HUD also said public housing tenants who do not abide by this new policy could be evicted.

## LCC

From page A1

This fall semester, LCC reported a total of 72,142 semester credit hours. The amount of state funding a college gets is determined by the number of semester credit hours taken. Most college courses are three semester credit hours. That means they meet for three hours per week over a semester.

"We are hoping that we continue to increase and maintain our enrollment," said Vincent Solis, LCC vice president for instruction and student services. "Our goal is to develop a college-going culture."

In fall 2015, the dual enroll-

ment program at LCC had a student enrollment of 1,576. This fall semester, the program had 2,099 students enrolled, an increase of 33 percent.

Trustee Gilberto Martinez said he was happy and praised the work of Solis and his staff.

He said LCC's programs, such as the nursing department, have experienced a healthy enrollment.

According to an Inside Higher Ed story published in November, enrollment at many Texas community colleges has rebounded due to dual enrollment.

The story says that, "Last year, there were more than 133,000 Texas high school students enrolled in dual-credit courses, compared to

about 17,800 dual-credit students in 2000, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. These students account for at least 25 percent of the total enrollment at 17 of the state's 50 community college districts. The growth is spurred partially by the affordability of dual enrollment for students, but also by colleges and high schools working together to better perfect the handoff of students."

LCC's enrollment peaked in 2011, when 10,076 students registered for a total of 88,345 semester credit hours. The number dropped the following year, with LCC reporting an enrollment of 9,356 students and 82,362 semester credit hours.

## Plane landing gear collapses

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Authorities say everyone was safely evacuated from a United Express plane after its nose gear collapsed when it landed at San Antonio International Airport.

San Antonio Fire Department spokesman Woody Woodward says that when the plane landed Sunday afternoon its nose gear collapsed. He says 55 people were safely evacuated from the plane via emergency slides. He says there was no fire.

Woodward says there was only one minor ankle injury reported but the person refused treatment because she was concerned about making her connecting flight.

## HOMELESS

From page A1

Laredo Homeless Coalition. Angie Osterman, the food bank's marketing specialist, said they hope to increase their amount of distribution next year.

The South Texas Food Bank aims to alleviate hunger in eight counties throughout South Texas. The food bank serves an average of 28,000 families per month, having provided 175,000 meals this last year.

Lucia Garcia, originally from Laredo, returned back home recently from Wisconsin where her husband found work for six months as a carpenter. Garcia frequents

Bethany House and was among the clients who received a care package.

"I didn't expect it, it was very nice receiving the food, hygiene, shoes and the blankets," Garcia said. "It is a gift and it is very nice. I am very grateful. It's appreciated. We're homeless, we stay here sometimes or sometimes on the streets. It's easier to go to work and have a home and pay bills. It's very difficult being homeless."

Garcia said she and her husband have been homeless for a month this time around and they have a limited supply of necessities. She said she is thankful for all the help that Bethany House provides. Bethany House offers emergency

shelter for both men and women.

The shelter is usually at full capacity every night. Transitional housing is also available for a longer period of stay, typically for families that find themselves without a home. Monica Bautista, director of community relations at Bethany House, said the shelter works closely with school districts as they help in identifying homeless families.

"We get a lot of referrals from the school districts, both UISD and LISD. The way that works is that usually the first persons to identify that a kid is homeless is the teacher," Bautista said. "Maybe the kid brings up in a conversa-

tion what his living situation is, so the teacher identifies that they're homeless and we usually get a call from the liaisons from either school district and that's how we usually start a process to bring a family in."

Bautista attributes each school district's role as key because that is where collaboration comes in and they may begin to help families in need. The shelter also provides breakfast, lunch and dinner each day. About 1,350 of the meals prepared every day are served through different programs. Roughly 550 meals are served on site at the dining facility and 500 are delivered to people that are homebound. Food is prepared and

provided for the kids cafe as well. The Housing Authority of the City of Laredo works with Bethany House to feed children in public housing.

"It's been a partnership that we're very happy that they've supported us and they've continued to help us in our initiative to help the low income residents of our colonias," Julia Orduña, planning and community affairs specialist of Laredo Housing Authority, said.

The partnerships between the local agencies is vital in aiding the homeless and in preventing homelessness. Monica Urdiales Alleman, doctor of nursing practice, spoke about the importance of a team effort among the agencies

during the 12th annual March Against Hunger and Homelessness. Alleman said it is a barrier when one agency is unable to provide the proper resources for someone in need. Once agencies respond as a system, services may be provided efficiently.

For now clients like Garcia are happy with the shelter and said they've done a nice job keeping it clean and peaceful.

"I'm glad, I'm very blessed — not with all the material things. There are so many positives to look at. I'm here and I'm alive," Garcia said. "I want to prosper, everybody here that I know wants to prosper in their own way."

## TEXAS

From page A1

policy may take a back-seat. The wild card: abortion policy, due to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling against Texas' 2013 restrictions.

Here are key issues to watch — and what might get overshadowed — when lawmakers begin their 140-day session on Jan. 10:

## Immigration

The Department of Public Safety wants more than \$1 billion to help secure the Texas-Mexico border, but Trump's promises to build a towering wall and impose an immigration crackdown could spare the state from spending so much.

Trump's victory also may spur approval of two contentious immigration initiatives that stalled in previous sessions: A would-be ban on "sanctuary cities" requiring police officers to enforce federal immigration laws and the repeal of a 2001 law offering cheaper in-state tuition at public universities to some high school graduates who came to the U.S. illegally.

## Education

There are bipartisan calls to spend more on

K-12 classrooms but lawmakers won't be compelled to do so because the Texas Supreme Court declared the school finance system constitutional in May, ending a lengthy legal fight.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, a tea party favorite who heads the Texas Senate, is again championing school vouchers, which give families public money to pay for private and religious schools. He could have a powerful ally in Betsy DeVos, a "school choice" advocate tapped to be Trump's education secretary.

But for years, the issue's been stymied in the Texas House by Democrats and by rural Republicans wary of hurting public schools that are the lifeblood of their small districts.

## Transgender bathrooms

Texas already led a multistate lawsuit that has temporarily blocked President Barack Obama's directive allowing transgender students to use the public school bathrooms of their choice. Now, Patrick and other top Republicans are backing proposals banning transgender people from doing the same in all Texas bathrooms — mimicking a law that North Carolina

passed last year to national outcry, boycotts and the loss of lucrative sporting events.

Democrats and business leaders are opposed, as is Republican House Speaker Joe Straus, who says the issue isn't urgent and worries about North Carolina-like backlash.

## State budget

Oil prices staying so low for so long have cooled the Texas economy. Lawmakers finished their last session in 2015 with about \$4 billion in projected budget surpluses, but much of that may evaporate because projected state tax revenues declined. Oil and natural gas now accounts for about 8.5 percent of Texas' overall economic output, according to the comptroller's office.

There's still \$10-plus billion in the rainy day fund — money top Republicans have vowed to mostly preserve. Yet, doing so will make it tougher to cover rising Medicaid expenses and pay for costly fixes to a troubled foster care system while also delivering on GOP promises to expand property tax cuts that have already lost the state billions.

## Foster care

A federal judge is

overseeing the foster care system overhaul, needed because hundreds of at-risk children are going unseen by caseworkers due to understaffing at the Child Protective Services agency so acute that some youngsters have slept in state offices.

Gov. Greg Abbott is clamoring for faster improvements, but they won't come cheap. Lawmakers have already approved nearly \$150 million in special emergency funding — and that's just the start.

## Abortion

Lawmakers may strike back after the U.S. Supreme Court dismantled key portions of the state's 2013 abortion restrictions.

One untouched policy was a ban on abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy; legislators could try to move that ban up by a few weeks. Some Republicans also want to prohibit abortion in the case of severe fetal abnormalities, meaning the procedure could be available in Texas only if the mother's health is threatened.

## Guns

"The Year of the Gun" during the 2015 session allowed license holders to carry handguns in plain sight and bring them onto college campuses. Now, conservatives could tweak those laws to ensure there are fewer zones where authorities have kept gun

bans, such as zoos and some public buildings.

But firearm policy may otherwise take a back-seat since there appears little appetite for "constitutional carry," or letting non-license holders — virtually anyone in Texas — openly carry guns.

## Marijuana

Relaxed marijuana laws for legal and medicinal use have even come to more conservative states like Arkansas, but don't count on Texas to follow suit. After the Legislature took the baby step of legalizing cannabis oil to treat epilepsy in 2015, Abbott declared that the state would go no further, likely dooming bills for broader legalization.

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