Texas Slips in CNBC's Business Rankings as Quality-of-Life Score Drags Down Performance

By Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) - Texas slipped two spots in CNBC's 2026 *Top States for Business* ranking, falling from No. 2 last year to No. 4, as a sharply low quality of life score offset the state's strengths in workforce, economic growth, and technology. The annual index, released Tuesday, evaluates states across ten weighted categories, with infrastructure and quality of life carrying increased influence in this year's methodology.

Texas continued to outperform most of the country in business fundamentals, earning the nation's top score for workforce and landing in the top three for both economic strength and technology and innovation. But CNBC awarded the state an **F** in quality of life—ranking Texas **49th** nationally—citing health care access, crime rates, worker protections, and reproductive rights restrictions as factors that pulled down its overall standing.

The downgrade has drawn national attention. Yahoo Finance noted that Texas' business metrics remain among the strongest in the country, but the expanded weight of infrastructure and quality of life indicators "cost the state a higher finish." Meanwhile, outlets including AOL, the *El Paso Times*, and Yahoo News highlighted Texas' placement as the **second worst state to live in**, a separate CNBC assessment derived from the same quality of life scoring. Those stories emphasized the tension between Texas' rapid population growth and its low ranking on social and living condition measures.

Political commentators have also seized on the report, with some conservative columnists accusing CNBC of ideological bias and others arguing that the ranking reflects genuine challenges facing residents. Despite the criticism, CNBC defended its methodology, saying the expanded scoring better reflects the conditions that attract and retain workers.

Texas remains a top tier business destination, but the latest ranking underscores a widening gap between the state's economic performance and the lived experience of many residents—a divide that may shape future debates over policy, investment, and growth.

REV. AL SHARPTON AND NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK (NAN) PARTNER WITH THE KING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE "MARCH ON WASHINGTON 2026: DEFEND THE VOTE"

NAN Media

New York, NY (July 14, 2026) – National Action Network (NAN) Founder and President Rev. Al Sharpton, together with Martin Luther King III, Arndrea Waters King, and the Drum Major Institute and other partners, announced "March on Washington 2026: Defend the Vote," to be held in Washington, D.C. on Friday, August 28, 2026, the 63rd anniversary of the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

A growing coalition of national partners has already confirmed its participation, including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), the National Urban League (NUL), the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), UnidosUS, the Working Families Party, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (Lawyer's Committee), and Veterans Equity Project, Inc., Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Common Cause, People Power United, United For Democracy, Vote.org, Family Equality, In the Public Square, Bet Mishpachah, Faith in Action Fund, Faith in Action National Network, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), the Interfaith Alliance, and multiple houses of worship.

The Honorable Yvette Clarke, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, will be joined by a delegation of Members at the march, and additional partners will be announced in the coming weeks. Registration for March on Washington 2026: Defend the Vote is now open. Supporters from across the country are encouraged to register today at the National Action Network website. Register now at **www.nationalactionnetwork.net**

EDITORIAL | Data Centers Are Texas' New Company Towns — And Voters Are Right to Be Angry

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Texas didn't stumble into a data center crisis. It was built, brick by brick, incentive by incentive, by state leaders who insisted that anything done in the name of "innovation" was automatically good for the people footing the bill. Now, in the heat of the 2026 governor's race, those same leaders want voters to believe they've suddenly discovered the downsides of the very industry they spent a decade courting.

Communities aren't buying it. And they shouldn't.

Abbott's Pivot Isn't Policy — It's Panic

Gov. Greg Abbott spent years celebrating Texas as the "epicenter of AI development," waving through billions in tax breaks and touting every new hyperscale project as proof of his economic vision. But when rural counties began revolting — when residents started showing up at meetings with water use data, noise complaints, and electric bills that made no sense — Abbott's tune changed overnight.

Now he wants restrictions. Now he wants guardrails. Now he wants developers to pay for their own power, water, and infrastructure.

It's a remarkable transformation, arriving not when the problems emerged, but when the politics did.

Texans have seen this pattern before: deregulate aggressively, ignore the consequences, then scramble to look tough once the backlash becomes too loud to ignore. It happened with the power grid. It happened with school vouchers. And now it's happening with data centers.

The Real Costs Have Been Hiding in Plain Sight

Data centers don't just appear. They demand staggering amounts of electricity, water, land, and public subsidy. Texas has handed out nearly **$3 billion** in incentives to lure them — money that could have strengthened rural hospitals, modernized water systems, or kept property taxes in check.

Instead, Texans are watching their resources get siphoned into facilities that create few jobs, strain local infrastructure, and leave communities fighting for basic protections.

A **University of Texas** study warns that data centers could consume **up to 9% of statewide water use by 2040**. Rural counties already facing drought conditions are being told to sacrifice their aquifers so multinational corporations can train AI models.

That's not economic development. It's extraction.

Hinojosa Is Right About One Thing: This Crisis Was Manufactured

Democratic challenger Gina Hinojosa has hammered Abbott for building "the biggest data center giveaway in the whole country," and the criticism lands because it's true. The governor didn't just allow the boom — he engineered it. He championed the incentives. He celebrated the deals. He framed every new project as proof of Texas' superiority.

Now he wants credit for trying to rein in the consequences.

Texans deserve better than election year repentance.

A Fractured GOP Reveals the Depth of the Problem

The Republican split over data centers isn't ideological — it's existential.

Rural lawmakers like Shelley Luther want protection from industrial encroachment. Business oriented officials like Railroad Commissioner Wayne Christian want the investment, no matter the cost. Abbott is trying to stand in both camps at once, and voters can see the strain.

This isn't a debate about technology. It's a debate about power — who has it, who uses it, and who pays the price.

Texas (Especially Austin) Must Decide What Kind of Tech Future It Wants

Data centers are not inherently bad. But the way Texas has pursued them — with blind faith, bottomless subsidies, and no meaningful oversight — has turned them into symbols of a deeper political failure.

Texans are not anti technology. They are anti being taken for granted.

The governor's race has made one thing clear: voters are tired of being told that "innovation" requires their silence, their land, their water, and their tax dollars. They are tired of being treated as collateral damage in someone else's economic narrative.

Data centers didn't become a political flash point by accident. They became one because Texans finally said enough.

And this time, they're saying it loudly.

St. John Pocket Park Will Close on July 16 Through August of 2028 for the St. John Site Redevelopment Project

Austin Parks and Recreation

Austin

The City of Austin will close St. John Pocket Park, 889 Wilks Ave., beginning Thursday, July 16, 2026, through August of 2028. The City has partnered with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) and Greystar to redevelop 19 acres of adjacent vacant land into a vibrant mixed-use, mixed-income community.

As part of this collaborative effort, St. John Pocket Park will be transformed into an approximately 4-acre neighborhood park from a 0.79-acre pocket park. The expanded park will feature new amenities including a splash pad, walking trails, a pavilion, and public art, creating an enhanced and welcoming space for the community.

Get the latest facilities, pools and park closure information at: **AustinTexas.gov/ParkClosures**.