

Jessica Mangrum Sworn In As Judge

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
VILLAGER Columnist



Jessica Mangrum and family.

(VILLAGER NEWS) - After a long-fought primary and general election, Jessica Mangrum, is the elected Judge of Austin's 200th District Court. After the District Court saw its long-time Judge Gisela Trina elevated to the 3rd Court of Appeal, there was a void.

The 200th District Court is a civil court that oversees civil litigation matters. Therefore, it fits right in the middle of Jessica's experience

since she has handled numerous civil cases. Jessica is a Lawyer and former Precinct Chair.

Jessica practices in the federal judicial districts in Texas and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal. Her practice focuses on civil litigation, which includes personal injury, professional liability, and construction cases. Also, she is board certified in Construction Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

African Diaspora Hold the State of Address

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
VILLAGER Columnist

(VILLAGER NEWS) - As the 2020 Census countdown comes to an end, they have tried to reach out to the African community. Over the years, the African community in central Texas has more than doubled. However, no one knows

the actual amount of the African population.

Unlike other immigrant groups, the African community has self-isolated itself, which in the long duration has damaged or affected the prosperity of the community as a whole. According to the African Caucus, "isolation of the African community has stifled entrepreneurship and political clout."

Since there is no official data of Africans living in Central Texas, it is hard for an elected official and civic leaders to establish programs, which the African community can benefit. It is time for Africans to open themselves to the rest of central Texas.

Congress Opens New Session as Virus, Biden's win Dominate

by Lisa Mascaro
Associated Press

(AP) - Congress convened Sunday for the start of a new session, swearing in lawmakers during a tumultuous period as a growing number of Republicans work to overturn Joe Biden's victory over President Donald Trump and the coronavirus surges.

Democrat Nancy Pelosi was set to be re-elected as House speaker by her party, which retains the majority in the House but with the slimmest margin in 20 years after a November election wipeout.

Opening the Senate could be among Mitch McConnell's final acts as majority leader. Republican control is in question

until Tuesday's runoff elections for two Senate seats in Georgia. The outcome will determine which party holds the chamber.

The House and Senate opened at noon, as required by law, with strict COVID protocols. Elbow bumps replaced handshakes as senators took the oath of office. Fewer family members than usual joined lawmakers at the Capitol.

"To say the new Congress convenes at a challenging time would be an understatement," McConnell said as the chamber opened.

Still McConnell said with the start of a new year there are reasons for optimism, "let's make the American people proud."

Mrs. Virden Wins Austin District 10

by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon
VILLAGER Columnist

(VILLAGER NEWS) - On December 15, 2020, a runoff between the incumbent Jimmy Flannigan and challenger Jennifer Virden. After a battle, Virden defeated Jimmy



Jennifer Virden

Flannigan.

Jimmy Flannigan considers himself a long-time small business owner and community and business advocate. He started his business, Site Street, building websites for student or-

ganizations while at The University of Texas at Austin in 1997. He has long worked on addressing Austin's crippling transportation issues through his work on the Austin Chamber Transportation Committee for

several years.

On the other hand, Jennifer Virden is a native Austinite and a life-long resident of what is now called District 10. "I grew up in Northwest Hills and currently live in Westover Hills. I attended AISD, and I have a degree in Finance from The University of Texas at Austin. I'm a small business owner, and Austin Haus Realty & Restorations, LLC is my company. I'm an independent real estate broker and remodeling general contractor. My main focus is residential real estate brokerage, but as a designer/remodeler, I specialize in optimizing existing square footage to make a homeowner's space more beautiful and functional," stated Jennifer.

City Expands Curbside Composting Collection to 55,000 New Austin Households



AUSTIN, TEXAS – Austin Resource Recovery (ARR), a department of the City of Austin, announces the fourth and final expansion of the Curbside Composting Collection Program to approximately 55,000 additional Austin households to begin in February.

Currently, about 152,000 homes receive the curbside composting collection service. This final expansion will provide the service to all remaining ARR customers after a four-year phased in approach that began in 2017. In previous years, ARR offered in-person open house events giving new curbside composting customers the opportunity to learn about the program, learn how to use the service and receive free resources to start composting. This year, in order to adhere to COVID-19 safety regulations, we will hold a virtual townhall and will delay the opportunity to distribute free kitchen collectors and compostable bags until it can be done safely for both customers and staff.

"We are very excited to complete the expansion of our Curbside Composting Program," said Austin Resource Recovery Director Ken Snipes. "Keeping compostable items out of area landfills will extend the life of the landfills, improve Austin's air quality, and reduce harmful greenhouse gases."

A recent study showed that nearly half of material residential customers send to the landfill is compostable. The Curbside Composting Program collects food scraps, yard trimmings and food-soiled paper, and converts them into nutrient-rich compost. This program is part of the City of Austin's zero waste goal to divert 90 percent of materials from landfills by 2040.

"As we enter a new year, it's wonderful to share this good news," said Chief Sustainability Officer Lucia Athens. "Providing every ARR customer with access to curbside composting empowers them to send less material to the landfill, which lowers our community's emissions and creates a product that enriches our soil."

Customers included in this year's curbside composting expansion were mailed a notification postcard in early-January informing them of their new service and inviting them to participate in a virtual townhall in late January. Customers can search for their address using the Austin Recycles app and My Schedule tool at austinrecycles.com to see when their first collection will be.

Curbside Composting may also help Austinites save money on their utility bill. After putting food scraps and food-soiled paper in their green carts, customers will likely have less trash each week. This may allow them to downsize to a smaller, less expensive trash cart.

For more information about Curbside Composting, how to participate in the virtual townhall, resources and instructional videos visit austintexas.gov/composting.



U.S. Capitol in Washington, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021. (Erin Scott/Pool via AP)

It's often said that divided government can be a time for legislative compromises, but lawmakers are charging into the 117th Congress with the nation more torn than ever, disputing even basic facts including that Biden won the presidential election.

Fraud did not spoil the 2020 presidential election, a fact confirmed by election officials across

the country. Before stepping down last month, Attorney General William Barr, a Republican appointed by Trump, said there was no evidence of fraud that affected the election's outcome. Arizona's and Georgia's Republican governors, whose states were crucial to Biden's victory, have also stated that their election results were accurate.

Nevertheless, a

dozen Republicans bound for the new Senate, led by Sens. Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, and even more in the House have pledged to become a resistance force to Biden's White House, starting with efforts to subvert the will of American voters. These GOP lawmakers plan to object to the election results when Congress meets on Wednesday to tally his

306-232 Electoral College victory over Trump.

House Republicans boosted their ranks in the November election, electing a handful of women and minorities, more than ever. Some of the new GOP lawmakers are being called the "Freedom Force," and a counter to the "squad" — Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and other liberal Democratic women who swept to office in the last session.

Progressive Democrats bolstered their ranks with newcomers aligned with more liberal priorities.