

Vanessa Fuentes Wins Austin City Council District 2

by **Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon**
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Vanessa Fuentes, Austin City Council District 2

(VILLAGER) - Following Delia Garza's resignation from the Austin City Council post, District 2 became a vacant seat. Three candidates sought to run, David Chinchancan, Vanessa

Fuentes, and Casey Ramos. Among the

three, Vanessa Fuentes won.

"I am a proud Southeast Austinite and an experienced community leader on education, health equity, and transportation," stated Fuentes. As City Council elect Vanessa Fuentes steps into office, she will focus on how to keep District 2, as a large portion is being gentrified.

Finally, Councilwoman Vanessa Fuentes won with over 50 percent of the vote, despite having two other people in the race. She has managed to get local activists and groups in the district to support her campaign. One of her unique challenges will be to address the COVID-19 issues as District 2 has been severely affected by it.

Representative Sheryl Cole Files First Bills of 87th Legislative Session; Builds on Progress from 86th



(AUSTIN) - Representative Sheryl Cole (D - Austin) has filed her first bills of the upcoming 87th Legislative Session. She had the following to say: "While we still face many unknowns in this upcoming legislative session, I still intend to vigorously represent House District 46 to the best of my abilities."

Despite the unprecedented challenges facing legislators in 2021, Rep. Cole is expanding her legislative agenda and has prefiled the following bills:

-HB 582: relating to the exemption of tuition and laboratory fees at public institutions of higher education for certain paramedics.

oIn Texas, firefighters qualify for certain college credits, and most paramedics are also firefighters. However, this isn't the case in every

jurisdiction, including for Austin-Travis County EMS. HB 582 closes this gap. A substantially similar version of this bill successfully passed out of Calendars in the 86th Legislative Session.

-HB 583: relating to early voting by mail by any qualified voter.

oCurrent vote by mail law requires voters to be aged 65 or older, disabled, or out of the county for the election. All Texans should have the option to vote by mail, and HB 583 would provide that.

-HB 584: relating to automatic voter registration on issuance or change of a driver's license or identification card by the Department of Public Safety.

oThe Texas "Motor Voter" program is court ordered and inadequate. HB 584 not only codifies this program, it makes the registration automatic.

-HB 585: relating to the prosecution and penalties for possession of marijuana.

oThis bill reduces penalties for the possession of marijuana across the board. For example, possession of 2 to 4 ounces would be reduced from a Class A to a Class B misdemeanor. This bill successfully passed out of committee in the 86th Legislative Session.

-HB 586: relating to the creation of a state financing program administered by the Texas Public Finance Authority to assist school districts with certain expenses; granting authority to issue bonds or other obligations.

oAllows the TPA to issue and sell obligations to finance public school projects that are smaller or shorter in term than what a traditional bond would normally provide for. This bill successfully passed out of the House in the 86th Legislative Session.

-HCR 5: Directing the Texas Facilities Commission to name the building being constructed on the east side of North Congress Avenue between 16th and 17th Streets the Barbara Jordan Building.

Beyond what she has filed today, Rep. Cole is committed to supporting further common sense progressive legislation, including Medicaid Expansion, the Texas George Floyd Act, Coronavirus related relief, additional voter protection and empowerment, and more.

Williamson County is a Political Battleground

by **Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon**
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Jacquita Wilson is a Williamson County Democrat party activist who has helped Williamson County turn into a battleground. Photo by Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon

(VILLAGER) - In the past five years, Democrats have worked hard to make Williamson County a competitive one. This election is the first time Williamson County Democratic Party has filled up 90% of the races with candidates. Moreover, that will guarantee very aggressive races throughout the county, from the Williamson County Judge position to the Williamson County Treasurer race.

Williamson County Democrats have proven they can win races. Nearly two years ago, Wilco Dems won two seats in the Cedar Park race. While just last month, Democrats won a seat on the Round Rock City Council. Democrats have turned a very red county into a purple county, which means the city has become a battleground. It is the demographics that have helped to change the Williamson County political ground. In Williamson County, numerous vibrant immigrant communities come from various parts of the world, such as India, China, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Ireland, Ethiopia, and Vietnam. Furthermore, Williamson County is slowly becoming an area where Democrats have a chance to win.

Pfizer: COVID-19 shot 95% effective, seeking clearance soon | by LINDA A. JOHNSON, AP

(AP) - Pfizer says that more interim results from its ongoing coronavirus vaccine study suggest the shots are 95% effective and that the vaccine protects older people most at risk of dying from COVID-19.

The announcement, just a week after Pfizer first revealed promising preliminary results, comes as the company is preparing within days to formally ask U.S. regulators to allow emergency use of the vaccine.

Pfizer initially had estimated its vaccine, developed with German partner BioNTech, was more than 90% effective after 94 infections had been counted. With

Wednesday's announcement, the company now has accumulated 170 infections in the study -- and said only eight of them occurred in volunteers who got the actual vaccine rather than a dummy shot. One of those eight developed severe disease, the company said.

The company has not yet released detailed data on its study, and results have not been analyzed by independent experts.

Pfizer said its vaccine was more than 94% effective in adults over age 65, though it is not clear how the company determined effectiveness in older adults, with only eight infections in



the vaccinated group to analyze and no breakdown provided of those people's ages.

Earlier this week Moderna, Inc. announced that its experimental vaccine appears to be 94.5% effective after an interim analysis of its late-stage study.

Pfizer says it now has the data on the vaccine's safety needed to seek emergency authorization from the Food and Drug Administration.

The company didn't disclose safety

details but said no serious vaccine side effects have been reported, with the most common problem being fatigue after the second vaccine dose, affecting about 4% of participants.

The study has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries. The trial will continue to collect safety and efficacy data on volunteers for two more years.

Pfizer and BioNTech said they expect to produce up to 50 million vaccine doses

Togolese Community End of Year Festival

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December 26, 2020, the Togolese American community plans to host their annual end of year celebration. Over the years, there has been exceptional growth in the Togolese American community in Central Texas. As a result, their community has sought to organize itself by starting an association.

According to the leadership of the Togolese American community, they want to showcase their culture and grow the Togolese Community of Central Texas. Currently, Togolese Americans have migrated to Texas for employment and education opportunities.

The leaders of the Togolese-American community believe, having a legally established association will help their outreach efforts. Their outreach includes events that seek to educate the community about Togo.

globally in 2020 and up to 1.3 billion doses in 2021.

U.S. officials have said they hope to have about 20 million vaccine doses each from Moderna and Pfizer

available for distribution in late December. The first shots will be offered to vulnerable groups like medical and nursing home workers, and people with serious health conditions.