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RAPPIN'
Thomas Wyatt

Hinojosa vs Abbott

Democratic state Rep. **Gina Hinojosa** has officially clinched her party's nomination for governor, setting the stage for a high stakes November matchup against **Gov. Greg Abbott**, who easily won the Republican primary and is seeking to become the longest serving governor in Texas history.

Hinojosa, an Austin area lawmaker and five term representative known for her sharp critiques of Abbott's education policies, enters the general election as the first Democrat in over three decades with a viable path to breaking the GOP's hold on the governor's mansion. Her campaign has centered on **public education, affordability, and political accountability**, positioning herself as a foil to Abbott's push for school vouchers and his deep ties to major donors.

Her nomination caps a rapid rise from local advocate to statewide contender. A civil rights and union attorney before entering the Legislature, Hinojosa has built her brand on defending Texas families "left out by a political system that favors insiders and wealthy donors," a message she first sharpened when launching her campaign in late 2025.

The November contest is expected to be one of the most closely watched races in the country. Abbott, in office since 2015, is seeking a fourth term that would cement his place in Texas political history. Hinojosa, meanwhile, is betting that demographic shifts, voter frustration over rising costs, and backlash to state level crackdowns on local control will create an opening unseen since the 1990s.

Turnout patterns from the March primaries suggest a competitive landscape, with hundreds of thousands of Texans casting ballots across major counties and signaling heightened engagement heading into the fall.

For Democrats, Hinojosa represents both a generational shift and a test of whether Texas is finally ready to break its long Republican streak. For Republicans, Abbott's campaign will aim to prove that even amid statewide change, the GOP's grip on the governor's office remains firm.

Texas's Civil War



Hinojosa

Abbott

The Architecture of Power — Mapping the Abbott Machine and the Hinojosa Insurgency Trying to Break It.

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Texas is heading into a governor's race that functions less like an election and more like a forensic investigation into how political power is built, maintained, and protected. At the center of that examination is **Gov. Greg Abbott**, whose decade in office has produced a sprawling, donor driven political apparatus that touches nearly every corner of state governance. Opposing him is **Gina Hinojosa**, the Austin lawmaker whose campaign is explicitly designed to expose the machinery Abbott built — and the human cost of its operation.

To understand the stakes, you have to understand the structure. Abbott's political empire is not just a campaign; it is a network. Over the past ten years, Abbott has consolidated influence through a triad of mechanisms:

- (1) donor aligned policy pipelines,
- (2) expanded executive authority, and
- (3) state level interventions that override local control.

The donor pipeline is the most visible. Abbott's largest financial backers — including billionaire voucher advocates, deregulation champions, and private sector interests with stakes in state contracts — have poured millions into sustaining his agenda. Their fingerprints appear across legislative priorities: school vouchers, corporate tax incentives, privatized border operations, and the weakening of municipal authority. These donors don't just fund campaigns; they shape the policy environment in which those campaigns operate.

The second pillar is executive power. Abbott has repeatedly used emergency authorities, agency directives, and state level deployments to implement policies that never passed through the Legislature. Border operations, policing expansions, and regulatory overrides have been executed through executive channels that limit public oversight. Critics argue that this has created a shadow governance structure — one where decisions with billion dollar consequences are made behind closed doors, insulated from scrutiny.

The third pillar is preemption: the systematic stripping of authority from cities and counties. Abbott's administration has overridden local rules on policing, environmental protections, public health, and housing — effectively centralizing power in Austin while weakening the ability of communities to govern themselves. The result is a state where local democracy is increasingly symbolic, not functional.

Hinojosa's campaign is built as a counter investigation into this architecture. Her legislative record shows a consistent pattern: following the money, exposing the beneficiaries, and challenging the legal mechanisms that allow state power to bypass public accountability. Her opposition to vouchers is not just ideological; it is forensic. She has traced how voucher proposals intersect with donor interests, how they redirect public funds into private networks, and how they destabilize rural and urban districts alike.

Her critique of Abbott's border and policing operations follows the same pattern. She points to ballooning budgets, opaque contracting processes, and the absence of measurable outcomes. She argues that these operations function as political theater — expensive, unaccountable, and designed to reinforce the governor's brand rather than address systemic issues.

The forensic contrast between the two candidates is stark. Abbott's Texas is built on centralized authority, donor aligned policy, and the erosion of local control. Hinojosa's Texas is built on restoring public institutions, strengthening democratic oversight, and dismantling the financial and political networks that have shaped state governance for a decade.

The November election will determine which model prevails. But the deeper truth is this: the race is not just about who becomes governor. It is about whether Texans are willing to confront the machinery that has governed them — and whether an insurgent campaign can dismantle a political architecture designed to withstand exactly this kind of challenge.

INSIDE



How a "bone-spur" draft dodger is doing running America's military. See **CHIEF** Page 4



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The collapse of DEI turned Black women into a force of nature. See **ABANDONED** Page 6

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Texas Polls Keep Missing the Truth — Because They Keep Missing Texans

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Texans have learned the hard way that national narratives rarely fit the realities on the ground here. That's why the latest warnings about unreliable polling heading into the 2026 midterms should matter more in Texas than almost anywhere else. The article by W. Joseph Campbell lays out a simple truth: polling has stumbled in election after election, and the industry is entering this cycle weakened, fragmented, and less accountable than ever. For a state as politically complex and rapidly shifting as Texas, that instability carries real consequences.

Texas is already one of the hardest states in the country to poll accurately. Low response rates among Black, Latino, and rural voters, combined with explosive suburban growth and unpredictable turnout patterns, mean that even the best designed surveys struggle to capture the electorate's true shape. When national outlets treat Texas as a foregone conclusion — usually leaning on the same polling models the article warns are unreliable — they flatten the state's political diversity and miss the volatility that defines modern Texas politics.

The stakes are high. Polling errors don't just distort pundit chatter; they shape turnout. When surveys project comfortable Republican leads, Democratic enthusiasm drops. When polls suggest Democrats are competitive, Republican turnout surges. In a state where elections are decided by who shows up, not by sweeping ideological shifts, bad polling becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. It can



depress civic participation, misdirect campaign resources, and leave entire communities believing their voices don't matter.

The article also highlights the collapse of major polling institutions — from FiveThirtyEight's shutdown to Monmouth University's polling center closure — and the retirement of respected pollsters after high profile misses. What replaces them is a patchwork of mixed method pollsters experi-

menting with text based outreach, online panels, and hybrid sampling. Texas will be one of the primary testing grounds for these new methods, not because the industry is innovating for our benefit, but because traditional phone based polling simply doesn't reach enough Texans to be reliable.

This turbulence matters because Texas is not the static political monolith national commentators imagine. Migration continues to reshape the suburbs. Latino voting blocs remain diverse and dynamic. Rural turnout swings dramatically from cycle to cycle. And urban centers — from Houston to Austin to Dallas — are growing younger, more diverse, and more civically engaged. Polling that fails to capture these shifts doesn't just miss the mark; it misinforms the public about who we are.

As the article notes, polling remains the primary lens through which journalists and the public interpret the "ebb and flow" of campaigns. That's precisely why Texans should approach this year's numbers with skepticism. Polls can offer snapshots, but they cannot substitute for on the ground organizing, community engagement, or the lived experiences of voters who rarely pick up the phone for a survey.

Texas deserves better than narratives built on shaky data. We deserve coverage that reflects the complexity of our electorate, not recycled assumptions from national desks. And we deserve political analysis that recognizes what every Texan already knows: this state is changing, and no poll — especially in a year marked by industry turmoil — can fully capture that transformation.

The 2026 midterms will be shaped not by projections, but by participation. Texans should treat every poll as a rough estimate, not a verdict. The real story of this election will be written by the people who show up, not the numbers that try to predict them.

Top Ladies of Distinction Celebrates 59 Years of Service, Sisterhood, and Leadership



(AUSTIN, TX) - Capital City Chapter Honors Legacy of Founders While Celebrating Generations of Women Making a Difference

The Capital City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. celebrated its Founders Day and 59th Charter Day with an elegant and memorable evening on Sunday, February 22, 2026, at Balcones Country Club in Austin, Texas.

Top Ladies of Distinction — Capital City Chapter was founded on February 24, 1967, and for nearly six decades the chapter has proudly served the Central Texas community through leadership, mentorship, and impactful service initiatives.

The celebration brought together a full house of Top Ladies, Top Teens of America, Lords, community partners, and distinguished guests for an evening honoring the chapter's rich legacy of service, leadership, and sisterhood.

Guests were welcomed into a beautifully decorated setting where they enjoyed an elegant sit-down dinner surrounded by fellowship and celebration. The evening was filled with grace and sophistication as the Top Ladies arrived elegantly dressed in shades of pink and white, proudly representing the spirit and unity of the Capital City Chapter.

Adding to the ambiance of the evening, a talented saxophonist provided smooth and soulful melodies during dinner, creating a warm and sophisticated atmosphere that guests thoroughly enjoyed.

One of the most meaningful highlights of the evening was the special recognition of the chapter's five past Presidents, whose leadership and dedication helped shape the legacy and continued success of the Capital City Chapter. Their contributions were acknowledged with heartfelt appreciation by current Chapter President Sheri A. Marshall and Founders Day Co-Chair Lady Sharon Hudspeth-Holmes.

In addition to honoring the past Presidents, the chapter also paid special tribute to three of its beloved Orchids—members over ninety years of age who continue to represent the legacy and strength of the organization. Lady Peti, Lady Lee Hall, and Lady Beulah Jones were recognized for their years of dedication, wisdom, and service to Top Ladies of

Distinction. The chapter also acknowledged members who have maintained over twenty-five years of membership in Top Ladies of Distinction.

Guests also had the opportunity to enjoy a lively vendor marketplace, where attendees indulged in a little retail therapy while supporting local businesses. A festive Photo Booth added another memorable touch, allowing members and guests to capture special moments from this milestone celebration.

For nearly six decades, the Capital City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction has remained steadfast in its commitment to service, leadership, and community impact. The chapter continues to make a meaningful difference through initiatives that include developing and mentoring young leaders through Top Teens of America, fostering strong community partnerships, supporting community beautification projects, enriching the lives of senior citizens, and advancing the Status of Women through the impactful projects and programs of Top Ladies of Distinction.

Through these ongoing efforts, the chapter proudly continues its mission of uplifting families and strengthening the community. Surely, the organization's eight visionary founders would be proud to see the lasting legacy of excellence and service that continues to thrive today.

"As we celebrated 59 years of service and sisterhood, we were reminded of the powerful legacy our founders established," said Sheri A. Marshall, President of the Capital City Chapter. "Our commitment remains strong as we continue to mentor youth, serve our community, and empower women to lead with purpose, passion, and excellence."

As the evening concluded, members and guests reflected with pride on 59 years of leadership, service, and sisterhood, while looking ahead with excitement toward the chapter's 60th Charter Day milestone in 2027.

What began in 1967 with a vision to uplift women, youth, and communities continues today through generations of dedicated Top Ladies who proudly carry that mission forward—ensuring that the legacy of leadership, service, and excellence will continue to shine for years to come.

**AISD 2025–2026
School Year Calendar**

Austin ISD serves a large portion of students in the Austin area. For the 2025–2026 school year, the AISD calendar includes the following highlights:

- First Day of School: **August 19, 2025** (Tuesday)
- Fall Break / Thanksgiving Week: **November 24–28, 2025**
- Winter Break: **December 22, 2025 – January 2, 2026**
- Spring Break: March 16–20, 2026
- Last Day of School (Students): **May 28, 2026** (Thursday)

For the full calendar and official updates, visit the AISD Academic Calendar.

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LBJ Library Reopens with Interactive Exhibit Highlighting Johnson's Presidency

by Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell | The Villager

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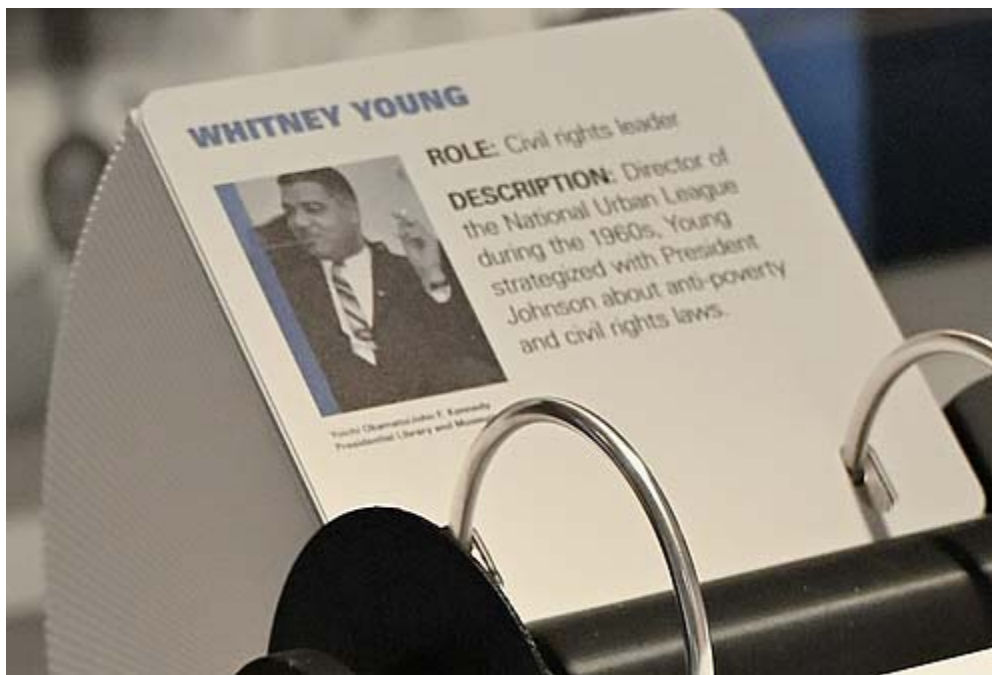


Photo of Whitney Young, Civil Rights Leader and Director of the National Urban League during the 1960s. /Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell

(AUSTIN, TX) — Community visitors' steps into the newly renovated Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library to experience an exhibit that will bring to life the leadership and complex legacy of the nation's 36th president, Lyndon B. Johnson, into sharper focus.

Reopened on March 7, the updated permanent exhibition features multimedia storytelling and interactive displays on the expanded historical perspectives that guide guests through Johnson's journey from the Texas Hill Country to the White House. The exhibit explores the defining moments of his presidency,

including the historic landmark Civil Rights movement and such programs that were aimed at reducing poverty and expanding education and healthcare in America.

Visitors also encounter the challenges and tensions of Johnson's presidency, including the political and social upheaval of the 1960s and the difficult decisions surrounding the Vietnam War. Through immersive galleries and updated technology, the exhibit provides deeper context for understanding Johnson as both a visionary reformer and a leader navigating one of the most turbulent periods in

modern American history.

The LBJ Presidential Library is located on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin; the library continues to serve as a center for history, the life of LBJ, Social Justice, and Community conversations. The renewed exhibit invites visitors to reflect on how Johnson's policies and leadership continue to influence conversations today about civil rights, equity, and the role of government in shaping society.

The exhibit is open to the public daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through May 1. Visit LBJ Presidential Library for more information.

When They Can't Tell Jesse Jackson from Reggie Jackson

The Disrespect Isn't a Gaffe — It's a Pattern

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - There are slips of the tongue, and then there are slips of the mask. What happened on Newsmax this week was the latter. Alina Habba — attorney, surrogate, and ever present defender of Donald Trump — attempted to invoke the legacy of Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson Sr., only to blurt out the name Reggie Jackson, the baseball star. A civil rights giant reduced to a confused talking point by someone who couldn't be bothered to know the difference.

For Black audiences, especially those who lived through the movement Jesse Jackson helped build, this wasn't funny. It was clarifying.

Because this is what happens when our history is treated as a prop — when our leaders are referenced only to score political points, not to honor the movements they led or the sacrifices they made. It's what happens when people who have never marched, never organized, never risked anything for justice try to borrow the moral authority of those who did.

Rev. Jackson's



During a recent Newsmax interview, Habba stated, "I think if you look at polls, Kamala Harris's comments of desperation at Reggie Jackson's funeral, and she didn't even know him. You know, if you look at this, they're reaching so far,"

name carries the weight of Birmingham, Selma, Chicago, and the Rainbow Coalition. It carries the memory of Dr. King's final days. It carries decades of voter registration drives, anti poverty campaigns, and international diplomacy. To confuse him with a baseball player is not merely ignorance — it is a symptom of a political culture that refuses to treat Black struggle as serious, sacred, or worthy of study.

And let's be honest: this wasn't an isolated moment. It fits neatly into a long pattern of commentators and operatives who speak about Black communities without knowing us, invoke our leaders without respecting them, and weaponize our history without understanding its cost.

The insult isn't that Habba misspoke. The in-

sult is that she was so comfortable speaking on national television about a civil rights icon she clearly knew nothing about. That comfort comes from a society that still treats Black history as optional — something you can skim, skip, or butcher without consequence.

But there is consequence. Our communities notice. Our elders notice. And NNPA readers, who have carried the memory of Rev. Jackson's work longer and more faithfully than any cable news panel, certainly notice.

If they cannot distinguish between Jesse Jackson and Reggie Jackson, they have no business speaking on our leaders, our movements, or our legacy. And they certainly have no business pretending to speak for us.



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The Dodger in Chief: A Presidency Built on Bluster, Not Service

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Donald Trump has spent decades cultivating the image of a strongman—someone who talks in absolutes, threatens force as casually as he sends a tweet, and treats military power like a personal accessory. But the record shows something far less heroic: a man who avoided military service when it was his turn, only to reinvent himself later as a chest thumping commander eager to flex American firepower.

Public reporting has long documented that Trump received multiple draft deferments during the Vietnam War, including a medical exemption for bone spurs. The physician who signed off on that diagnosis later told reporters he did so as a favor to Trump's father. That history matters because it reveals a pattern: when the personal cost is high, Trump steps aside; when the cost falls on someone else's children, he steps forward with swagger.

Trump's Documented Draft Deferments Five Vietnam Era Deferments

Public reporting and military records show Donald Trump received five deferments between 1964 and 1972:

- Four student deferments while attending Fordham University and the University of Pennsylvania.
- One medical deferment in 1968 for bone spurs in his heels.

The Bone Spur Diagnosis

• The podiatrist who signed the paperwork, Dr. Larry Braunstein, later told associates he issued the diagnosis as a favor to Fred Trump, the family's landlord at the time.

• The doctor's daughters publicly confirmed this account years later, saying their father felt pressured to help the Trump family.

Military Classification Timeline

- 1964–1968: Classified as 2 S (student deferment).
- 1968: Reclassified as 1 A (available for service) after graduation.
- Late 1968: Reclassified as 1 Y (qualified only in national emergency) due to bone spurs.
- 1972: Reclassified as 4 F (not qualified for service).

The Cruc

- The deferments themselves were legal.
- The circumstances — a politically connected family, a questionable medical exemption, and a



later public persona built on military bravado — have fueled long standing scrutiny.

The Context

- Many young men without wealth or connections were drafted during the same period.
- Trump has repeatedly described his own “personal Vietnam” as avoiding sexually transmitted infections in the 1970s, a comment widely criticized by veterans' groups.
- His later rhetoric about military force stands in stark contrast to his avoidance of service.

Now, in office, he postures like a wartime leader—issuing threats, escalating conflicts, and framing military action as a show of dominance. The contrast is jarring. It's one thing to avoid a war you oppose; it's another to avoid service entirely and then spend your political career performing toughness at the expense of others.

Some commentators have drawn parallels between Trump's rhetoric and the strongman style of Vladimir Putin—another leader who wraps himself in militaristic imagery to project power. The comparison isn't about ideology; it's about performance. Both men rely on spectacle, both lean on the theater of force, and both use the military as a stage for personal mythmaking.

But here's the truth communities like ours understand deeply: real strength isn't measured by how loudly a leader threatens war. It's measured by whether they value the lives placed in harm's way. It's measured by whether they understand the weight of sending someone else's child into conflict. And it's measured by whether they treat mili-

tary service as a sacrifice—not a prop.

A System That Favored the Well Connected

- During the Vietnam War, draft deferments overwhelmingly benefited wealthier, white, and college enrolled men.
- Student deferments, medical exemptions, and personal connections created a pipeline of protection for families with resources.

Who Ended Up on the Front Lines

- Working class men, especially those without access to college, were drafted at far higher rates.
- Black draftees were disproportionately sent into combat roles, a pattern documented by the Department of Defense and civil rights groups throughout the 1960s.
- In some years, Black soldiers accounted for nearly 25% of combat deaths despite being a much smaller share of the U.S. population.

The Role of Influence and Access

- Wealthy families could secure:
- Private medical evaluations
- Legal assistance to navigate deferment categories
- University placements to maintain student status
- Poor and working class families had none of these buffers.

The Cruc

- Trump's deferments didn't occur in a vacuum — they occurred in a system where privilege determined who fought and who didn't.
- His later embrace of militaristic rhetoric stands in stark contrast to the young men who had no choice but to serve.

The Context

- The draft was not just a military process; it was a mirror of American inequality.
- Leaders who avoided service through privilege while later glorifying war deepen that historical wound.

Trump's record shows a man who dodged the sacrifice but embraces the spectacle. A man who avoided the draft but now speaks casually about military escalation. A man who wants the image of a wartime president without ever having borne the burden of war.

That contradiction isn't just hypocrisy—it's dangerous. Because when leaders who have never paid the cost of conflict start playing general, it's always the public who pays the price.

AMERICA'S TRUTH

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - As the nation closed its 100th Black History Month, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani sat across from historian Latoya Coleman and did something rare in American politics: he admitted that he had helped erase Black Americans from the story of the country they built. His earlier description of New York as a “city built by immigrants,” he said, failed to tell the full truth. He looked into the camera and apologized, acknowledging that sweeping generalizations like his obscure the fact that Black New Yorkers helped build the city and that enslaved Africans built the foundation of the United States itself. His admission, reported by *The Griot* and recirculated widely, is more than a moment of personal correction. It is a window into a national habit—one that replaces historical accuracy with a comforting myth and, in doing so, erases the centrality of Black labor, Black suffering, and Black endurance in the making of America.

The phrase “immigrants built this country” has become a staple of political speeches, award show podiums, and civic celebrations. It is often delivered with pride, meant to signal inclusivity and unity. But it is also historically imprecise and morally dangerous. It collapses two fundamentally different experiences—voluntary migration and forced enslavement—into a single, sanitized narrative. Enslaved Africans were not immigrants. They did not choose to come. They were trafficked as property, their bodies turned into capital, their labor extracted to build the ports, banks, shipping industries, and early commercial power of cities like New York. Their descendants continued to build and sustain these cities while being denied the rights, protections, and wealth building opportunities afforded to others. To fold this history into a broad immigrant narrative is to erase the violence that made the nation possible and the debt that remains unpaid.

Mamdani's apology matters because it exposes how easily erasure slips into the language of even well intentioned leaders. Coleman's question—how to include enslaved people and Indigenous people in the story of New York—forced the mayor to confront the limits of his own rhetoric. His response was direct: “We have to tell the full story.” He acknowledged that statements like his, however com-



A group of escaped slaves that gathered on the former plantation of Confederate General Thomas Drayton. After Federal troops occupied the plantation these former slaves began to harvest and gin cotton for their own profit, circa 1862. Corbis/Getty Images

mon, “lose sight of the fact that Black New Yorkers helped to build New York City.” When Coleman said his earlier comment made her “feel a type of way,” he did not deflect. He apologized, saying that supporting immigrant communities should never require overlooking the contributions of Black Americans.

But the danger of these narratives extends far beyond language. They shape policy priorities, public memory, and the political imagination. The article notes that even as Mamdani apologizes, many Black New Yorkers remain concerned about policies that threaten to displace them from neighborhoods they built. His proposal to raise property taxes on the wealthy has sparked fear among Black homeowners who worry that rising costs will accelerate a trend already underway: the city's Black population has declined by nearly 200,000 people over the past two decades. NAACP New York State Conference president L. Joy Williams praised Mamdani's crackdown on bad landlords but emphasized that Black residents need support for first time homeownership, not just rental protections. “Our members want policies that turn renters into owners to close the racial wealth gap,” she said, adding that the administration has not shown enough focus on the needs of Black New Yorkers.

This is where narrative and policy collide. When leaders frame the city—or the nation—as a product of immigration, they unintentionally sidestep the specific harms inflicted on Black communities. They flatten the distinctions between those who arrived seeking opportunity and those who arrived in chains. They create a story in which everyone shares the same origin, and therefore no one is owed anything specific. This narrative makes it easier for institutions to avoid confronting the legacy of slavery, the theft of labor, the exclusion

from property ownership, and the structural barriers that continue to shape Black life. It allows the country to celebrate diversity without acknowledging the debt owed to Black Americans.

The Black Press has always existed to challenge these distortions. For more than a century, Black newspapers have insisted on telling the truth when the nation refuses to. They have documented the realities of slavery, Jim Crow, redlining, police violence, and political exclusion. They have preserved the stories that mainstream institutions tried to bury. In this moment, as public figures repeat phrases that blur the line between migration and enslavement, the role of the Black Press is as urgent as ever. It must continue to insist on precision, because precision is the only antidote to erasure.

The truth is not complicated. The United States was built on stolen land and stolen labor. Enslaved Africans built the early wealth of the nation, and their descendants continued to build its cities while being denied the right to fully live in them. Immigrants contributed enormously to the country's growth, but they did not build its foundation. That foundation was laid by people who were never immigrants at all.

Mamdani's apology is a step toward restoring accuracy to the national story. But apologies alone cannot undo decades of euphemistic language. The work ahead requires leaders, institutions, and media—especially the Black Press—to speak with clarity, not comfort. It requires telling the truth even when the truth disrupts cherished myths. And it requires naming, without hesitation, that Black Americans did not simply contribute to the building of the United States. They built its foundation under the terror of enslavement. Anything less than that truth is not history. It is erasure.



Pam Bondi Exposed: How a Record of Selective Justice Set the Stage for Brad Bondi's Unusual Legal Treatment

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - The suspicious leniency shown to Brad Bondi didn't emerge out of thin air. It is the predictable outcome of a political lineage built on selective enforcement, image driven "law and order" theatrics, and a long history of protecting the powerful while preaching accountability to everyone else. To understand Brad Bondi's treatment, you have to understand the playbook his sister, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi, perfected during her years in public office.

Pam Bondi built her brand on tough talk—victims' rights, strict prosecution, moral clarity. But her tenure as Florida's attorney general tells a different story, one defined by strategic inaction, political convenience, and a pattern of decisions that consistently benefited the well connected.

This is the context that makes Brad Bondi's treatment so glaring. It's not an anomaly. It's a continuation.

Pam Bondi's Tenure:

A Pattern of Selective Enforcement

Pam Bondi's record is littered with moments where her public rhetoric and her actual decisions diverged sharply.

She talked about protecting consumers—yet her office notoriously declined to pursue certain high profile fraud investigations after political donations flowed in from the very entities under scrutiny.

She talked about transparency—yet she repeatedly slow walked or sidestepped inquiries that threatened powerful allies.

She talked about accountability—yet she intervened in ways that softened or redirected investigations involving politically connected figures.

These weren't isolated incidents. They formed a pattern: tough on the powerless, cautious around the powerful.

So when Brad Bondi found himself facing legal scrutiny, the institutions involved didn't just see a defendant. They saw the brother of someone who had spent years embedded in the political inner circle, someone who knew how to pull levers, someone whose name still carried weight in the corridors where decisions are made quietly and consequences are negotiated away.



Pam Bondi

Rhetoric vs. Reality

Pam Bondi's public persona has always leaned heavily on moral clarity—stern lectures about responsibility, crime, and consequences. But her actions consistently revealed a different set of priorities.

She championed "equal justice," yet her office's enforcement patterns told a story of unequal application.

She positioned herself as a defender of the vulnerable, yet her decisions often aligned with the interests of the powerful.

She claimed to stand above politics, yet her tenure was marked by decisions that conveniently aligned with political allies and donors.

This gap between rhetoric and reality is not just hypocrisy. It's infrastructure. It's the scaffolding that supports the kind of preferential treatment her brother received.

How Pam Bondi's Legacy Shaped

Brad Bondi's Outcome

The institutions handling Brad Bondi's case

didn't need explicit instructions. They already understood the landscape. They understood the name. They understood the network.

They understood that Pam Bondi's influence—her connections, her media presence, her history of protecting insiders—still reverberates.

So investigations slowed. Subpoenas narrowed. Agencies deferred to one another in a bureaucratic relay race designed to exhaust public attention. Prosecutors who normally rush toward high profile cases suddenly found reasons to wait, reconsider, or quietly step back.

This wasn't coincidence. It was muscle memory.

The Bondi Shield Is Structural, Not Personal

Pam Bondi didn't have to pick up the phone. She didn't have to issue a statement. Her influence is baked into the system—into the relationships, the expectations, the unspoken rules that govern how institutions treat people with proximity to power.

Brad Bondi benefited from that structure. He benefited from the shadow of his sister's tenure, from the political capital she accumulated, from the message her career sent to the very agencies now tasked with scrutinizing him.

And that is the scandal.

The Public Deserves More Than Silence

The public deserves answers about why Brad Bondi's case was handled with such unusual delicacy. They deserve to know why agencies behaved as though they were managing a political liability rather than pursuing the truth. They deserve to know why the system bent so dramatically for a man whose last name carries political weight.

Because until those answers come, one conclusion is unavoidable: the Bondi family's political power didn't just influence the narrative. It shaped the outcome.

And in doing so, it exposed a justice system that protects its insiders while punishing its outsiders—a system where accountability is conditional, and consequences are negotiable for the right people.

This isn't justice. It's a dynasty protecting itself.

EXPOSÉ: Inside the GOP's Filibuster Meltdown and Trump's Texas Power Play

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - What began as a routine intra party endorsement decision has spiraled into a full scale pressure campaign, with Donald Trump weaponizing the Texas Senate runoff to force Senate Republicans toward a procedural cliff. The moment Trump's early lean toward Sen. John Cornyn leaked, the White House froze. The leak wasn't just an annoyance — it was treated as a breach of loyalty, and it derailed what GOP leaders hoped would be a stabilizing endorsement.

Then came Ken Paxton's gambit — a move White House officials openly called "genius."

Paxton, trailing and politically battered, threw Trump a lifeline disguised as an ultimatum:

Pass Trump's "SAVE America Act," kill the filibuster if necessary, and I'll consider dropping out.

It was a brazen appeal to Trump's fixation on the bill — a sweeping package of voting restrictions,

mail in voting limits, and a ban on transgender identity surgeries for minors. And it worked. Paxton, once an afterthought, was suddenly back in Trump's orbit.

Trump seized the moment — and turned the Texas runoff into leverage over the entire Senate GOP.

Instead of endorsing Cornyn, Trump began tying his endorsement to the bill's passage. The message to Senate Republicans was unmistakable:

Change the rules. Eliminate the 60 vote threshold. Deliver the bill. Or watch Texas burn.

This put Senate Majority Leader John Thune in the crosshairs. Thune, who talks with Trump several times a week, has resisted gutting the filibuster — not out of defiance, but because he knows the votes simply aren't there. His public insistence that nuking the filibuster is "impossible" infuriated Trump, who now sees Thune as the obstacle standing between him and a legislative trophy he wants before the midterms.

Cornyn, sensing the ground shifting beneath him, made a desperate pivot.

In a New York Post op ed, Cornyn signaled he'd support "whatever changes ... may prove necessary" to pass Trump's bill — a stunning reversal from his long held opposition to altering filibuster rules. GOP insiders described it bluntly:

(VILLAGER) - While East Austin families were choosing between rent, groceries, and prescriptions, the Pentagon was choosing between **crab legs and lobster tail**.

In **September alone**, the U.S. military burned through **\$9 million** on luxury seafood—**\$6.9 million on lobster tail and \$2 million on Alaskan king crab**—as part of a record shattering **\$93.4 billion** end of year spending spree.

This wasn't a clerical quirk. It was a deliberate, accelerated "use it or lose it" binge under Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, whose Pentagon approved the **largest single month spending total ever recorded by any federal agency**.

And it happened while Austin—especially East Austin—was buckling under the weight of an affordability crisis that leaders keep insisting the federal government "can't afford" to fix.

Luxury for the Pentagon, Austerity for East Austin

Let's put the contrast in plain terms:

- East Austin families are rationing groceries.

"The survival instinct is a powerful one."

But even that wasn't enough. Sources say Trump remains unmoved, still demanding the bill's passage before he'll bless Cornyn's campaign.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking — and the GOP is staring down a self inflicted crisis.

- The runoff is already a bruising, 12 week affair.

- The withdrawal deadline is days away.

- The party has sunk nearly \$100 million into a primary that should have been settled months ago.

- And Trump is still dangling his endorsement like a sword over the Senate GOP's head.

The deeper story: a party trapped between its own institutional limits and a leader who refuses to recognize them.

Thune is trying to preserve the Senate's procedural guardrails.

Cornyn is trying to survive.

Paxton is trying to outmaneuver both of them.

And Trump is trying to bend the chamber to his will — using Texas voters as collateral.

The result is a Republican Party publicly fracturing over the filibuster, privately panicking about the general election, and increasingly defined not by policy but by the whims of a president who sees procedural norms as obstacles, not guardrails.

- The Pentagon was ordering lobster by the ton.

- East Austin elders are skipping medications because co pays spiked.

- The Pentagon was buying **\$100,000 Steinway pianos** for military brass.

- East Austin renters are being priced out of their own neighborhoods.

- The Pentagon was spending **millions on ribeye, donuts, and high end electronics** in the same month.

This is not a funding shortage. It's a priorities crisis.

The Federal Government Says "We Don't Have the Money"—But Clearly, It Does

Every time Austin advocates push for:

- federal housing support,
- expanded SNAP benefits,
- relief for rising utility costs,
- or investment in community health clinics,

See **SEAFOOD**, page 6

EXPOSÉ | Surf, Turf, and Silence: The Pentagon Feasted While East Austin Families Fought to Stay Afloat

By Villager staff

The Seafood Spree Wasn't Just Waste, It Was a Warning



Pete Hegseth

Continued from page 5

the answer from Washington is the same: *"There's no money."*

But there was money—**millions of dollars**—for a Pentagon seafood buffet.

There was money for luxury furniture.

There was money for electronics and catered feasts.

There was money for everything except the people who actually need it.

The numbers don't lie. The excuses do.

East Austin Is Living the Consequences of Federal Neglect

East Austin residents are facing:

- **Rent increases of hundreds of dollars a month**

- **Property taxes that outpace wages**

- **Food prices up 20–40% since 2020**

- **Medical debt rising even for insured families**

- **A shrinking supply of affordable housing**

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is burning through cash to avoid future budget cuts—cuts that never come, because Congress treats military spending as sacred and community spending as optional.

This is how inequality is engineered.

The Seafood Spree Wasn't Just Waste—It Was a Warning

Government watchdog Open the Books confirmed the spending. Snopes verified the broader pattern. The facts are not in dispute.

But the timing matters.

The seafood binge occurred **just months before U.S. attacks on Iran and Venezuela**, part of a long documented pattern where military dining budgets spike ahead of escalation.

So while East Austin families were tightening their belts, the Pentagon was loosening its own in preparation for conflict.

This Is What Structural Disrespect Looks Like

East Austin has been told for decades to "be patient," "wait for relief," "trust the process," and "understand the constraints."

But the Pentagon faces no constraints.

It faces no austerity.

It faces no scrutiny that sticks.

The message is clear:

- **Communities must sacrifice.**
- **The military must never be inconvenienced.**

This is not shared sacrifice.

It's institutional gluttony.

What East Austin Deserves to Ask—Loudly

If the Pentagon can spend **\$9 million on crab legs and lobster in one month**, then:

- Why can't Austin get federal support for affordable housing?

- Why can't East Austin families get relief from skyrocketing food costs?

- Why can't local clinics get funding to keep elders healthy?

- Why can't renters get protection from predatory increases?

The answer is not "we can't afford it."

The answer is **"we chose not to."**

The Bottom Line

The Pentagon's seafood spree is not just a scandal—it's a mirror. It reflects a government that treats luxury as a necessity for itself and necessity as a luxury for everyone else.

East Austin families are not struggling because the money doesn't exist.

They are struggling because the money is being spent somewhere else—on lobster tails, crab legs, and pianos for the powerful.

And until that changes, the affordability crisis will not be an accident.

It will be a policy.

Black Women Are Rebuilding What Corporate America Abandoned

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Corporate America's retreat from its own racial justice promises has been swift, calculated, and devastatingly predictable. Four years after companies pledged to transform their cultures in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the very infrastructure built to support equity has been quietly dismantled. Diversity, equity, and inclusion roles have been slashed across industries, with some companies cutting these positions by more than half and others eliminating entire departments. The rollback has been most aggressive in tech, where DEI job postings have fallen sharply and internal programs have been stripped down to symbolic gestures. And as always, the people absorbing the impact first and most forcefully are Black women.

This is not an accident of economics. It is the result of a political climate that has made DEI a target and a corporate culture that never fully embraced equity beyond the press release. After the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling, companies seized the moment to retreat, citing "legal uncertainty" even though the decision did not require them to dismantle internal equity programs. The ruling became a convenient shield, allowing corporations to walk back commitments they had never intended to sustain. In the process, Black women—who were already navigating workplaces shaped by both racism and sexism—lost mentorship pipelines, leadership pathways, and the few institutional protections that existed to challenge bias.

Research from Harvard and other institutions confirms what Black women have long described: their career trajectories are uniquely shaped by team dynamics, racial isolation, and the absence of structural support. When DEI programs are gutted, these conditions worsen. The disappearance of equity offices in higher education mirrors the corporate retreat, leaving Black women faculty, staff, and students without the resources that once helped them navigate hostile environments. The rollback is national, coordinated, and bipartisan in its neglect. It is a reminder that institutions will always choose comfort over accountability unless forced otherwise.

Yet the story does not end with loss. Across the country, Black women are rebuilding their careers and professional ecosystems without waiting for corporate permission. They are launching businesses at some of the fastest rates in the nation, forming peer mentorship networks, creating community based professional circles, and designing their own equity infrastructures outside the reach of corporate gatekeepers. This is not the familiar narrative of resilience that corporations love to romanticize. It is a deliberate strategy born from clarity: when institutions retreat, Black women inno-



vate; when systems fail, Black women build.

For East Austin, this national pattern feels deeply familiar. Residents here have lived through decades of institutional retreat—school closures, health care deserts, uneven city investment, and the slow erosion of public commitments to Black neighborhoods. The dismantling of DEI programs is simply another version of the same story: when the structures meant to protect marginalized communities are weakened, those communities are expected to absorb the fallout alone. But East Austin also knows how to build outside the system. Black women here have long created their own networks of support, from church based organizing to neighborhood associations to entrepreneurial circles that thrive despite the city's uneven landscape of opportunity.

For NNPA readers across the country, the rollback of DEI is not just a workplace issue; it is a political signal. It tells us whose labor is valued only when it is convenient, whose voices are welcomed only when they do not challenge power, and whose futures are considered expendable once public attention shifts. The current wave of DEI cuts is not a correction or a neutral budget decision. It is a retreat from accountability, a reversal of promises, and a reminder that progress without enforcement is always temporary.

Black women are not waiting for institutions to rediscover their conscience. They are building new pathways, new economies, and new forms of collective power. The question is not whether they will rebuild—they already are. The question is whether the country will finally recognize that the future they are constructing is the one that institutions failed to deliver.

TDLR Suspends Midwife's License Following Maternal and Infant Deaths

from the Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation



There are Midwives Associations throughout the state of Texas. /East Texas Midwives Association/Facebook

(AUSTIN, TX)—The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) has issued an emergency order suspending the midwifery license of Salli M. Gonzalez. Gonzalez is prohibited from providing midwifery services in the State of Texas unless a court orders that license restored.

The emergency action follows investigations into two cases involving Gonzalez's care of clients that resulted in serious outcomes, including an infant death in February 2023 and a maternal death in April 2023. In both cases, TDLR determined Gonzalez failed to follow the standards of care and provisions of the Texas Midwifery Law and Rules.

In addition, TDLR was made aware of a social media discussion between Gonzalez and another midwife discussing a clinical situation involving several complications that would typically require a transfer recommendation under Texas Midwifery Law and Rules. In response, Gonzalez stated, "Those things are not concerning to me."

TDLR determined that Gonzalez's response and failure to identify issues requiring escalation could place pregnant clients and unborn children at risk. Based on Gonzalez's pattern of conduct and stated disregard for midwifery standards of care as well as

the Texas Midwifery Law and Rules, TDLR concluded that emergency action was necessary to protect public health and safety of pregnant women.

"TDLR's responsibility is to protect the health and safety of Texans," said TDLR Executive Director Courtney Arbour. "When a license holder's conduct poses a risk to the public, TDLR will take action to protect Texans."

TDLR provides regulatory oversight for a broad range of occupations, businesses, facilities, and equipment in Texas, including the Texas Lottery and Charitable Bingo programs. The agency protects the health and safety of Texans by ensuring they are served by qualified, licensed professionals. Inspections of individuals, businesses, and equipment are done on a regular basis to safeguard the public. Currently, the agency regulates 41 business and occupational licensing programs with more than 1,000,000 licensees across the state.

Visit TDLR's website for more information and resources. You can search the TDLR licensee database, and also find past violations in which a final order was issued against companies or individuals. TDLR's Customer Service line is available anytime between 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 1-800-803-9202.

A City on Edge: Inside Two Weeks of Turbulence, Triage, and Political Theater at Austin City Hall

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - For two weeks, Austin's City Council has operated under the glare of a city bracing for its largest festival season in years, a shaken public still processing a downtown shooting, and a political class struggling to maintain the appearance of cohesion. What looks like routine governance on paper has, in practice, been a scramble—an attempt to project stability while the seams of the city's infrastructure, public safety systems, and political alliances strain under pressure.

The past fourteen days reveal a government in constant motion, but not necessarily in control.

I. The Festival That Arrived Too Soon

SXSW 2026—marking its 40th anniversary—descended on Austin this week with the force of a cultural tidal wave. City leaders insist they are “more than ready,” but the timing could not be more fraught. The festival begins **less than two weeks after a 6th Street shooting**, a fact that has shaped every public statement and operational decision.

On March 11, the city began rolling out **aggressive road closures** across Congress Avenue, Red River, 6th Street, and surrounding corridors. Crews worked through the night as thousands of visitors poured into the city. Officials emphasized that the closures, congestion, and heightened police presence were necessary to ensure safety during a week when Austin's population temporarily swells.

Mayor Kirk Watson framed the disruptions as a civic obligation: large events “put an added strain on our city resources,” he said, urging residents to interpret the inconvenience as a sign of vigilance rather than dysfunction.

But beneath the polished messaging lies a city

government acutely aware that one misstep—one emergency response delay, one crowd-control failure—could shatter public confidence.

II. A Council That Can't Hide Its Fractures

While the city's public safety apparatus mobilized for SXSW, the council itself was embroiled in a quieter but telling conflict: **a weeks long internal fight over funding for park deck columns and pedestrian structures**. What should have been a straightforward infrastructure vote instead exposed rare, public infighting among the 11 member body.

The dispute was not about columns alone—it was about priorities, transparency, and the growing discomfort among members who feel major capital decisions are being rushed or obscured. The measure ultimately passed, but the political damage lingered. The episode revealed a council struggling to maintain unity at a moment when the city can least afford visible fractures.

This tension has seeped into work sessions and regular meetings, including the **March 10 work session** and the **March 12 regular meeting**, where the agenda appeared routine but the atmosphere was anything but.

III. Public Safety Dominates the Agenda

Even before the shooting, public safety had become the gravitational center of council activity. The February 26 meeting—still shaping the two week window—saw the approval of major funding for emergency response and mental health crisis services. That vote now reads as prescient, given the heightened scrutiny on the city's readiness for festival season.

In the days leading up to SXSW, the city expanded coordination between APD, EMS, and festival organizers. CapMetro extended transit services to accommodate the influx of residents and visitors, a move designed to reduce congestion and mini-

mize emergency response delays.

The message from City Hall has been consistent: Austin is prepared. But the subtext is clear: Austin must be prepared.

IV. A City Government in Perpetual Triage

The last two weeks have revealed a pattern—one that suggests a government reacting to crises rather than shaping the city's trajectory.

First, public safety concerns are dictating nearly every major decision.

Second, internal council fractures are becoming harder to hide, even as members attempt to present a united front.

Third, the city's operational bandwidth is consumed by festival logistics, leaving little room for proactive policymaking.

Fourth, community tensions—particularly after the downtown shooting—are influencing how council members communicate with constituents and with each other.

The result is a city government that feels less like a strategic body and more like an emergency command center.

V. The Stakes for Austin's Future

SXSW is more than a festival—it is a stress test. It exposes the strengths and weaknesses of Austin's infrastructure, leadership, and political culture. This year, the test is especially unforgiving.

If the city navigates the week without major incident, leaders will claim vindication. If it falters, the past two weeks will be remembered not as a period of preparation, but as a warning ignored.

Either way, the council's recent actions—its infighting, its urgency, its defensive posture—offer a revealing portrait of a city at an inflection point. Austin is growing faster than its governance structures can comfortably manage. The last two weeks have made that unmistakably clear.

Oil Breaks \$100 a Barrel Again

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - Oil surged past \$100 a barrel today, a threshold that signals not just global instability but a renewed economic threat to working families who have never recovered from the last affordability crisis. The spike comes as Iran intensifies attacks on energy facilities across the Gulf region, disrupting shipping lanes, damaging infrastructure, and forcing major producers to curtail operations. Even a historic release of 400 million barrels from international reserves failed to calm the markets. Instead, prices climbed higher, revealing just how fragile the global energy system has become and how quickly geopolitical conflict translates into household hardship.

For Black communities across the United States, the consequences are immediate and punishing. Transportation, groceries, utilities, and municipal services all rise in tandem with oil. Families already stretched by high rents, medical costs, and stagnant wages now face another round of price hikes driven by events thousands of miles away. The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway that carries a fifth of the world's oil, is effectively choked by conflict. Tankers have been struck, ports damaged, and oil fields targeted. Iraq has halted operations at all of its export terminals. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are scrambling to reroute shipments. Markets respond not to reassurance but to risk, and the risk is growing.

Political leaders abroad have begun warning companies not to exploit the crisis for profit. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Keir Starmer signaled that his government would intervene if energy firms use the moment to gouge consumers. In

the United States, however, families have heard these promises before. They have watched oil giants post record profits during periods of global turmoil while everyday people ration groceries, delay car repairs, and choose between heating and medication. Black households, who spend a disproportionate share of income on transportation and utilities, are once again positioned to bear the brunt of a crisis they did not create.

The return of \$100 oil exposes a deeper structural failure. The U.S. economy remains tethered to global energy markets in ways that leave working people perpetually vulnerable. Every international flare up becomes a domestic emergency. Every supply disruption becomes a new round of inflation. And every crisis becomes another reminder that policymakers have allowed corporate interests to dictate energy strategy while communities shoulder the consequences.

This moment demands more than temporary releases from strategic reserves or stern warnings to industry. It requires a rethinking of how the nation protects its most vulnerable households from global shocks. It requires accountability for companies that profit from instability. And it requires political courage to confront the systems that keep families one crisis away from financial collapse.

Oil may have crossed \$100 a barrel today, but the real cost will be measured in the lives of people who cannot afford another hit. Black America has endured decades of economic whiplash driven by forces far outside its control. The question now is whether leaders will finally act to shield communities from the next surge — or whether families will once again be left to weather the storm alone.

FOCUS: Iran-Linked Hackers Hit U.S. Medical Tech Firm

By Villager staff



(WAR) - An Iran-aligned hacker group known as Handala Team has claimed responsibility for a disruptive cyberattack on Stryker, a major U.S. medical technology company.

The incident marks the first significant Iranian cyber operation against an American business since the war began, escalating concerns about Tehran's digital reach. “Hackers appear to have accessed Stryker's Microsoft Intune device-management system, triggering remote wipes that disabled employees' work phones and halted internal communica-

tion. Cybersecurity analysts say the tactic mirrors Iran's history of “wiper” attacks designed to erase data and sow chaos. “Stryker says its core systems weren't breached and that the attack did not involve ransomware, but the disruption was global across its Microsoft environment. The company and Microsoft have not released further details. “The strike signals a shift from Iran's recent focus on espionage to more aggressive, destructive actions—raising alarms about how far Tehran may go as the conflict deepens.

PUBLIC NOTICES

The Pflugerville Independent School District will open Proposals for:
Construction Manager-at-Risk (CMR) for Construction of Multipurpose Rooms - DMS and PMS
 RFP 26-022JO
 on Wednesday, **April 22, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m.**
All proposals may be completed and submitted online through:
Bonfire portal: click this link:
<https://pfsid.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>
 Proposals is posted on the PFSID website at:
www.pfsid.net.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE pursuant to Texas Property Code Chapter 59, **Right Space Storage**, Said property 4405 Highway 71 East Del Valle, TX 78617, 512-996-7840, 21012 state highway 71 W Spicewood, TX 78669, 512-996-7840, 9507 Manchaca Road Austin, TX 78748 512-399-2829, 227 Park 35 Cove N Buda, TX 78610 512-996-7828, 9023 HWY 71, Austin, TX 78735, 512-996-7857, 3000 Highway 290 E Dripping Springs, TX 78620, 512-996-7852, 4105 2nd St. Taylor, TX 76574, 512-883-6373, 512-399-1518, 8956 Research Blvd Austin, TX 78758, 7650 West Highway 29, Georgetown, TX 78628, 512-729-6780, 11520 Hero Way West Leander, TX, 78641 512-379-6998, 16450 North ranch road 620, Round Rock, TX 78681, 512-399-1518, will hold a Public Sale in order to satisfy a landlord's lien **Thursday on 2nd of April 2026 at 10am**. Property will be sold to the highest bidder online and must be removed within 48 hours. The seller reserves the right to reject any bid and withdraw property from the sale. Bidding takes place on **StorageTreasures.com**. Unless otherwise noted, all units contain household goods and items. For a more detailed listing, please visit **StorageTreasures.com**, 4405 Highway 71 East Del Valle, TX 78617: Garrett Polich, Seanna Roysden, Grisleda Jaimes, 9507 Manchaca Road Austin, TX 78748: Jeremy Collins, 21012 State highway 71 W, Spicewood TX 78669: Elijah Nelson, 4105 2nd St. Taylor, TX 76574, Robert Castro Timothy Teichelman, Timothy Teichelman, Timothy Teichelman, Maria Rodrigues 8956 Research Blvd Austin, TX 78758: Lee Smith, Lee Smith, 7650 West Highway 29 Georgetown, TX 78628: Clinton Devey Dan Lopeda diaz, Jabar Sowemimo, Sierra Munoz, Varsha Valluri, Hailey Miller 11520 Hero Way West Leander, TX 78641: Malick Olayitan, Lone Star Roofing & Gutters - Doug Brooks, Lone Star Roofing & Gutters - Doug Brooks, Joy Porsche Jaleeya Jackson, 16450 North FM 620 Round Rock, TX 78681: 3003- Round Rock Jeanine Zeller Pendrey, Tanisha Degruy, Edgar Torres.



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IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME!

Round	Dates	Notes
Selection Sunday	March 15, 8 PM ET	Bracket revealed live on ESPN. NCAA
First Four	March 18–19	Hosted on campus sites of top-16 seeds. ESPN
First Round	March 20–21	Campus sites (top-16 seeds host). www.sportbusy.com
Second Round	March 22–23	Campus sites. www.sportbusy.com
Sweet 16	March 27–28	Fort Worth, TX & Sacramento, CA. ESPN
Elite Eight	March 29–30	Same regional sites as Sweet 16. www.sportbusy.com
Final Four	April 3	Phoenix, AZ. ESPN
National Championship	April 5	Phoenix, AZ. sportsbrackets.net

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - The road to the 2026 NCAA Women's Basketball Championship is officially underway, and March has once again become the month when every possession, every whistle, and every late game run can rewrite a season. With Selection Sunday set for March 15, teams across the country are fighting through the final stretch of conference tournaments, hoping to secure their place in a bracket that has grown into one of the most-watched events in American sports. For programs with national reputations, this week is about fine tuning rotations and protecting seeding. For bubble teams, especially those from HBCUs and mid major conferences, it is a final audition before the committee makes its choices live on ESPN.

The tournament officially begins with the First Four on March 18 and 19, hosted on the home courts of top 16 seeds. Those games will determine the final entrants into the 68 team field and often deliver some of the most emotional moments of March, as teams that rarely receive national attention fight for the right to keep playing. The First Round follows immediately on March 20 and 21, with the top seeds again hosting. The Second Round will be played March 22 and 23, closing out the opening weekend and sending the strongest teams to the regional stage.

This year's Sweet 16 and Elite Eight will be split between Fort Worth, Texas, and Sacramento, California, giving Texas fans a rare chance to watch the

nation's best programs compete for a Final Four berth without leaving the state. Those rounds will run from March 27 through March 30, and both sites are expected to draw heavy crowds, especially with the University of Texas entering the postseason as a likely top seed. For East Austin readers who follow the Longhorns closely, the regional placement could offer a meaningful home court advantage, with thousands of fans able to travel to Fort Worth on short notice.

The Final Four will take place April 3 in Phoenix, Arizona, followed by the national championship game on April 5. The NCAA has invested heavily in elevating the women's tournament in recent years, and Phoenix is preparing for one of the largest crowds in the event's history. With television ratings climbing and women's basketball continuing to break attendance records, this year's championship weekend is expected to be a cultural moment as much as a sporting one.

Before the bracket is revealed, however, the spotlight remains on conference tournaments unfolding across the country. The SWAC and MEAC are deep into quarterfinal play, with automatic bids on the line and HBCU programs fighting for national visibility. These games carry particular weight for communities that rarely see their teams highlighted on major networks, and an automatic bid can shift the trajectory of an entire athletic department. Other conferences, including the American, Confer-

ence USA, and the Coastal Athletic Association, are also in action this week, shaping the final at large picture and determining which teams will enter March Madness with momentum.

For Texas teams, the stakes are equally high. The Longhorns have spent the season building a résumé strong enough to keep them in the national conversation, and their path through the Big 12 tournament will influence their seeding on Selection Sunday. A top four seed would guarantee home games in the opening rounds, a significant advantage in a tournament where travel, fatigue, and crowd energy can determine outcomes as much as talent.

As the nation waits for the bracket reveal, the story of this year's tournament is already taking shape: a field deeper than ever, a growing national audience, and a postseason that continues to elevate women's basketball into a defining force in American sports. For communities across Austin and for readers who follow the game through a lens of equity, representation, and opportunity, March offers more than a championship chase. It offers a reminder of what investment, visibility, and access can do for athletes who have spent decades pushing the sport forward.

If you want, I can also produce a version tailored specifically for East Austin distribution, an HBCU centered sidebar, or a Texas focused tournament preview.

GOP attack backfires

(VILLAGER STAFF) - James Talarico has become the rare Texas politician who turns every attack into fuel. What was meant to be a GOP "gotcha" moment—an out of context clip framed with a flashing red warning—ended up amplifying his own message. Instead of scrambling, Talarico simply retweeted it with a calm, almost mischievous "I approve this message," flipping the script with the ease of someone who knows exactly who he is and who he's speaking to.

It's a pattern now. Every attempt to sideline him seems to ricochet back with more force. When a national



Texas State Rep. James Talarico

TV segment featuring Talarico was blocked, the interview migrated online and exploded, pulling in millions of views and millions of dollars in donations. When critics tried to paint Talarico's faith

rooted language as radical, it only sharpened his profile as a seminarian teacher turned candidate who refuses to separate moral clarity from public service.

The more opponents try to dim Talarico's spotlight, the brighter it burns. Even political commentators are starting to say the quiet part out loud: the attacks aren't landing. They're backfiring. And with the general election looming, Talarico is walking into the next phase of the race not as the embattled underdog some expected, but as the candidate whose momentum keeps growing every time someone tries to stop it.

Other Election Races Around the Nation

(VILLAGER STAFF) - Election night didn't roar so much as hum—quietly, insistently—like a current running beneath the country's political floorboards. In three very different states, voters sent up signals that, taken together, felt like a weather report for the months ahead.

In New Hampshire, a district long tinted red flickered unexpectedly blue, as Bobbi Boudman edged out a Republican in a place that had twice backed Trump. It wasn't a landslide; it was a pulse—proof that Democratic energy still has a way of slipping into unlikely corners.

Down in Georgia, the race to fill Marjorie Taylor Greene's seat turned into a crowded scramble, and in the chaos, Democrat Shawn Harris managed to climb to the top of the heap. He won't flip the district—no one's pretending otherwise—but his first place finish was a jolt, a reminder that even in deep red terrain, the ground can shift just enough to make people look twice.

Mississippi, meanwhile, told a different story. There, longevity beat out the drumbeat for generational change. Rep. Bennie Thompson, at 78, brushed aside a much younger challenger, proving that experience still carries weight in communities that have seen promises come and go.

And threading through it all was the unmistakable imprint of Trump's endorsement. Clay Fuller's win in Georgia's GOP contest showed that, even in a state where Republicans sometimes buck him, the former president's nod still lands with force.

Taken together, the night felt like a patchwork of contradictions—old power holding firm, new energy breaking through, and voters in every corner reminding the country that nothing in politics stays still for long.