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RAPPIN'

THOMAS WYATT

Fiscal Year 2027 Hearing Inbound

This is a public hearing notice directed toward residents of Travis County, stakeholders in the local justice system, and anyone who relies on the accessibility, preservation, and long-term integrity of district court records. The Travis County District Clerk's Records Management Plan for Fiscal Year 2027 outlines how critical public documents are stored, protected, digitized, and made available to the community. Because these records underpin transparency, accountability, and the functioning of the courts, the hearing is especially relevant to attorneys, legal service providers, archivists, researchers, journalists, and community advocates who routinely depend on timely and accurate access to court information.

The notice specifies that "the Travis County Commissioners will receive public comment on the Travis County District Clerk's Records Management Plan for Fiscal Year 2027, which includes the DISTRICT COURTS RECORDS TECHNOLOGY FUND (FUND 139) and RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND PRESERVATION FUND (FUND 127)." These funds directly influence how records are digitized, maintained, and preserved. Anyone concerned with modernization of court systems, long-term archival stability, or equitable access to public records has a meaningful stake in how these funds are allocated and managed.

Attending the hearing on October 27, 2026, at 9 A.M. in the Travis County Commissioners Courtroom provides an opportunity to voice support, raise concerns, or offer recommendations before the plan is finalized. Community participation ensures that decisions about public records reflect the needs of the people who use them most. For organizations that rely on court data—such as nonprofits, legal clinics, and media outlets—this hearing is a chance to advocate for improvements that strengthen transparency and public trust.

In short, this hearing matters because records management is not merely administrative; it is foundational to justice, civic engagement, and the public's right to know. Attending allows stakeholders to help shape a system that serves the community effectively and responsibly. You can view the official public notice on page eight of this issue.

STARLINK WARS



Ukraine Outcry Grows as Musk Tags Trump in Starshield Rift

by Villager staff

(WASHINGTON) - In the span of a few days, the narrative around Ukraine's battlefield communications shifted from technical frustration to geopolitical confrontation. Ukrainian officials, including President Volodymyr Zelensky, warned that degraded Starshield performance had led to failed missions and deadly consequences. Elon Musk, CEO of Starlink, responded by asserting that Starshield is not a SpaceX-controlled asset at all, but a U.S. government system — one whose operational limits are set by the Pentagon and "ultimately POTUS."

In October 2026, that means Musk is insinuating President Trump is to blame. Starshield is a secure satellite communications network developed by SpaceX for use by the U.S. government and military. It's essentially a classified, defense-grade version of Starlink, designed to handle sensitive data and national-security operations.

The implication is unmistakable: if Ukraine's soldiers are dying because their communications backbone faltered, Musk says the decision-maker sits in the Oval Office. It is an extraordinary public redirection of blame, one that places a sitting president at the center of a controversy unfolding thousands of miles away on a battlefield where every second of connectivity can determine survival.

This episode exposes a deeper structural crisis. Modern warfare increasingly relies on privately built, privately maintained systems whose owners can shape the battlefield with a single policy change or a single tweet. When those systems fail — or are throttled, or restricted, or politically constrained — the consequences are undeniably ominous. They are measured in human lives, in lost territory, in shattered families. And when responsibility becomes a political hot potato, accountability becomes harder to locate.

For Ukraine, the stakes are existential. For the United States, they are strategic. For Musk, they are reputational. But for the soldiers on the front line, they are immediate and irreversible.

We must confront the uncomfortable truth: the world has entered an era where the decisions of a president and the statements of a billionaire can collide in ways that reshape the fate of nations. And when those collisions occur, the public deserves clarity, transparency, and a full accounting of who made what decision — and who paid the price.

A Political Flashpoint Over a Text Message Blast

By Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) - Rep. Jeff Leach's call for Attorney General Ken Paxton to investigate the Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT) is less about a single "Back to School Toolkit" and more about the escalating fight over who controls the narrative around Texas schools.

Thousands of Texans — including Leach himself — received unsolicited texts linking to a toolkit that outlines how transgender students and educators can navigate bathroom policies, pronouns, and student clubs under Senate Bill 12. Leach argues the materials may encourage violations of the Parents' Bill of Rights and wants Paxton to determine whether the sender broke the law by distributing them.

But TENT says it didn't send the messages at all. The organization publicly called the texts an impersonation and says it is investigating who used its name. That leaves Texans with an unresolved question: was this genuine outreach, political sabotage, or a deliberate attempt to provoke an investigation during election season?

The toolkit itself is not new. It offers guidance for students seeking support in schools that have become increasingly restrictive under SB 12. Supporters say it helps families navigate confusing policies; critics say it encourages workarounds. The unsolicited texts, however, introduced a new



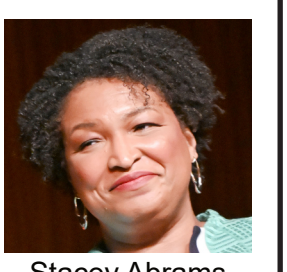
layer — privacy, data security, and political timing.

What's clear is that the state's top legal office is now being asked to scrutinize an advocacy group based on messages the group denies sending. And in a climate where gender-identity issues are routinely weaponized, the investigation request risks becoming another political cudgel rather than a fact-finding effort.

Texans need transparency about who sent the texts and why. Texans also require clarity on how SB 12 is interpreted and enforced, without turning every school-related dispute into a partisan spectacle.

The state should focus on truth, not theatrics. Students caught in the middle merit nothing less.

INSIDE



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Stacey Abrams Discusses Voting Rights and Democracy at LBJ Presidential Library

By: Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell | The Villager



Mark K. Updegrove and Stacey Abrams. Photo credit: Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell

(AUSTIN, TX) — Political leader and voting rights advocate Stacey Abrams visited the LBJ Presidential Library for a conversation about voting rights, democracy, and civic responsibility.

The program, An Evening With Stacey Abrams, featured Mark K. Updegrove, president and CEO of the LBJ Foundation and presidential historian, as part of the library's Live from the LBJ Library series.

Protecting the Right to Vote

Abrams discussed the history of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and ongoing challenges to equal voting access. She emphasized the importance of protecting voters' rights and preserving the integrity of elections.

President LBJ's Civil Rights Legacy

Abrams also reflected on President Lyndon B. Johnson's proactive leadership in advancing civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. She highlighted how these landmark measures expanded legal protections and opportunities for Americans, reinforcing the importance of presidential leadership in advancing equality and strengthening democracy.

Leadership, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement

Reflecting on her leadership in the Georgia House of Representatives, Abrams highlighted coalition-building and civic participation. Through organizations such as Fair Fight and Fair Count, she has worked to expand voter access and encourage participation in the democratic process.

A Call to Action for Citizens

The discussion reinforced that democracy requires informed, engaged citizens. Staying informed, participating in civic life, and holding elected officials accountable are important ways individuals can contribute to preserving democratic institutions for future generations.

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Travis County Voter Registrar issues statement confirming completion of updates for 32,000 Texas Department of Public Safety records

Celia Israel
Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar

(AUSTIN, TX) – Celia Israel, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar, released the following statement regarding voter registration application data transmitted by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS):

"Despite being caught off guard by our state partners right before the voter registration deadline, we have updated the Texas Elections Administration Management (TEAM) database to reflect the additional 32,000 records from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). To complete this monumental, but critical work, we expedited training approvals from the Secretary of State and leveraged employees from other divisions within the tax office willing to work nights and weekends. I would like to thank my tax office team members, who elevated their game to ensure everyone who registered through DPS was entered and will be eligible to vote in the Nov. 3 General Election.

Our work is demanding, time-sensitive, and vital to democracy. We still have about 20,000 paper voter registration applications to enter, and we are still receiving applications that were mailed by the deadline. We will continue working long hours over the next week to process these.

Early voting begins October 19. My mission is to ensure we provide the most accurate, up-to-date voter roll to our Travis County Clerk's office at the start of early voting."

United in Service: Three Distinguished Women's Organizations Join Forces to Strengthen Civic Engagement

by Jeanne M. Spencer

(AUSTIN, TX) - When organizations with shared commitments to service, leadership, and community empowerment unite around a common purpose, their collective efforts can make a meaningful difference. The Austin (TX) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated have joined forces to support voter registration and encourage civic participation throughout the Austin community.

Although each organization has its own distinguished history and traditions, all three share an enduring commitment to service and improving the quality of life for others. Their collaboration demonstrates the power of unity and the greater impact that can be achieved when organizations combine their talents, resources, and collective commitment to the public good.

Through their service as Volunteer Deputy Registrars (VDRs), participating members assist eligible citizens with voter registration, helping to ensure that community members have opportunities to participate in the democratic process. Voting remains one of the most fundamental rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It gives individuals a voice in decisions affecting education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and the well-being of their communities.

This nonpartisan collaboration extends beyond voter registration. It reflects the spirit of sisterhood, shared responsibility, and purposeful service that defines these distinguished organizations. Together, these women demonstrate that while organizational affiliations may differ, their commitment to community empowerment remains united. Their collective efforts affirm a powerful principle: When women of purpose join forces in service to others, the entire community benefits.

Inflation, Economic Strain Shapes the Midterms

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - Inflation's late-season surge has arrived at precisely the wrong moment for the people who currently hold federal power. The September Consumer Price Index **(CPI)**, rising **3.7% year over year**, landed as the final inflation report before voters cast their ballots. It is a number that does not exist in isolation; it sits atop months of household strain, rising energy costs, and a political climate already defined by economic unease. For communities like East Austin—where wages stretch thin and essentials cost more every quarter—the figure is more than just a number; it's a lived reality.

The political implications are unavoidable. When inflation accelerates this close to an election, it becomes a referendum on governance. Voters may disagree on the causes—global conflict, supply chain instability, policy missteps—but they are united in their frustration. Gasoline and diesel remain among the most volatile categories, and families who rely on cars to commute, shop, and care for loved ones feel these pressures daily. Small businesses, especially those rooted in historically Black neighborhoods, face rising operating costs that erode already-tight margins. These are the daily arithmetic of survival.

The administration's challenge is that inflation has become the country's dominant political issue, eclipsing even immigration and public safety in many polls. When the cost of living rises faster than wages, voters tend to hold the party in power responsible, regardless of the global forces at play. That dynamic is especially potent in midterms, when turnout hinges on motivation—and frustration is a powerful motivator.

Yet the deeper story is not simply partisan advantage. It is about trust. Communities that have weathered decades of uneven investment and policy neglect are acutely sensitive to economic shocks. They remember who shows up when times are hard, and who disappears when the headlines fade. Inflation, in this moment, is not just a statistic; it is a test of whether leadership understands the stakes for ordinary people.

As the country approaches Election Day, the question is not whether inflation will influence the midterms—it already has. The question is whether elected officials will treat this moment as a warning or a wake-up call. Voters are watching closely, and they are prepared to hold someone accountable for the rising cost of their livelihoods.

A Manufactured Scandal: Paxton Targets Pediatricians Without Evidence

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - Ken Paxton's claim of a sweeping conspiracy among pediatricians, insurance firms, and vaccine manufacturers is more than a political talking point — it is a destabilizing narrative that threatens public health, undermines medical trust, and weaponizes regulatory power for ideological gain. His allegations, launched through a series of investigations beginning in January 2026, assert that doctors are being "bribed" to vaccinate children, that insurers and pharmaceutical companies are colluding to "illegally incentivize" pediatric practices, and that the American Academy of Pediatrics (**AAP**) may be recommending vaccines for financial benefit rather than scientific evidence. None of these claims, to date, have been supported by findings, documentation, or independent verification.

Paxton's investigation has relied heavily on aggressive Civil Investigative Demands — more than 20 sent to major insurers, pharmaceutical companies, and pediatric practices — demanding up to a decade of records, down to trivial items like a $40 box of cookies from a vaccine representative. Pediatricians report spending thousands in legal fees simply to comply, despite the fact that routine childhood vaccines often operate at thin margins or even losses for small practices. Pediatricians "barely break even" on vaccines, according to the Texas Pediatric Society, contradicting Paxton's assertion that doctors are financially motivated to over-vaccinate.

The broader context reveals the political utility of Paxton's claims. His rhetoric aligns closely with the Make America Healthy Again (**MAHA**) movement and the anti-vaccine messaging championed by Donald Trump and HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Paxton has repeatedly invoked their narratives, and his investigations have coincided with key moments in his Senate campaign — including Trump's endorsement and his victory over Sen. John Cornyn in the May runoff. Public health experts and pediatricians have described the probe as politically motivated, designed to curry favor with anti-vaccine constituencies rather than address any documented misconduct.

Meanwhile, the consequences of Paxton's campaign are tangible. Texas vaccination rates are falling — only 93.3% of kindergarteners are fully vaccinated against measles — even as outbreaks loom. Families are left uncertain about whether their pediatricians will continue offering routine vaccines or whether medical advice is being chilled by fear of state investigation. The AAP, which broke from federal guidance after HHS attempted to reduce the childhood vaccine schedule, now finds itself under scrutiny for defending evidence-based immunization standards. Yet Paxton's office has produced no findings of wrongdoing, no evidence of bribery, and no substantiated proof of a "multi-industry scheme."

Editorially, Paxton's conspiracy claim functions as a political cudgel rather than a public health safeguard. It erodes trust in frontline medical providers, burdens small practices with costly legal demands, and injects partisan suspicion into the most basic elements of pediatric care. At a moment when misinformation already threatens community health, the state's top legal officer is amplifying unfounded allegations that cast pediatricians — among the lowest-paid and most community-embedded medical professionals — as profiteers in a shadowy vaccine cartel.

Texans deserve vaccine policy grounded in science, transparency, and genuine oversight — not investigations launched for political theater. Paxton's claims, absent evidence, risk turning routine childhood immunization into another front in the culture war, with children's health caught in the crossfire.

Turmoil on the Left

By Villager staff



(VILLAGER) - The Democratic Party is heading into the midterms under a cloud of internal tension, with ideological, generational, and strategic divides sharpening at a moment when unity is essential. While Democrats remain broadly aligned on core issues such as reproductive rights, voting access, and climate action, the coalition that carried them through recent cycles is showing signs of strain. Progressives argue that the party has moved too cautiously on economic inequality and corporate regulation, while moderates warn that sweeping policy demands risk alienating swing-district voters who will determine control of Congress.

These disagreements have become more visible as lawmakers navigate a challenging national environment. Inflation remains a top concern for voters, and while Democrats have pushed for targeted relief and stronger consumer protections, internal disputes over spending, taxation, and regulatory priorities have slowed consensus. Younger voters—once a reliable source of Democratic enthusiasm—have expressed frustration over the pace of action on student-loan reform, housing affordability, and climate commitments, raising concerns about turnout in key states.

Complicating matters further is the party's debate over messaging. Some strategists insist Democrats must foreground economic populism and cost-of-living issues, while others argue that defending democratic norms and civil rights should remain the central narrative. This tension has produced uneven communication across campaigns, with candidates emphasizing different priorities depending on district dynamics.

Despite these challenges, Democrats retain significant organizational strength and a broad policy agenda that resonates with many voters. Yet the internal turmoil—rooted in competing visions for the party's future—poses a real test as the midterms approach. Whether Democrats can reconcile these differences and present a cohesive message will shape their ability to defend seats and maintain momentum in a volatile political landscape.

Turmoil on the Right

By Villager staff



(VILLAGER) - The Republican Party is entering the midterm season in a state of visible internal strain, with ideological fractures, policy disagreements, and the weight of President Donald Trump's declining approval ratings converging into a moment of profound turbulence. Trump's grip on the GOP remains firm—62% of rank-and-file Republicans now identify as part of the MAGA wing—but that dominance has deepened the divide with non-MAGA conservatives, a faction increasingly alienated from the party's direction and showing signs of low turnout enthusiasm.

This internal split is unfolding against a backdrop of worsening national indicators for Republicans. Trump's approval rating has fallen to around 40%, with public disapproval rising sharply. His handling of inflation, the broader economy, and the ongoing war with Iran have drawn consistently low marks, with approval on inflation at just 30% and on the economy at 37%. These numbers matter: midterms historically function as referenda on the president, and Republicans have done little to distance themselves from Trump's agenda.

The consequences are already visible in the electoral landscape. States once considered safely Republican—Texas, Iowa, Alaska—have shifted left, and Democrats see credible opportunities to flip seats in North Carolina, Maine, and Ohio. Public trust on economic policy has also narrowed to a near tie, erasing what had been a clear GOP advantage earlier in Trump's second term.

Compounding these pressures are competing priorities within the congressional GOP itself. Party leaders are struggling to unite factions around must-pass legislation, including government funding and election-law changes, with conservatives demanding provisions that moderates and Senate Republicans oppose.

Taken together, the Republican Party enters the midterms not only facing an energized opposition but also wrestling with its own identity—caught between MAGA dominance and a restless, shrinking coalition uneasy with Trump's leadership.



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Diddy Injured in Prison After Fight with Jamaican Drug Lord

By Villager staff



Christopher "Dudus" Coke



Sean "Diddy" Combs

(VILLAGER) – Sean "Diddy" Combs' recent altercation inside FCI Fort Dix has quickly become one of the most discussed prison incidents of the year, not only because of Combs' celebrity status but because of the figure on the other side of the confrontation: Christopher "Dudus" Coke, the longtime Jamaican drug lord serving a 23-year federal sentence. According to multiple reports, the clash occurred on Friday, October 9, and left Combs with a serious head injury that required emergency transport to an outside medical facility.

The fight reportedly erupted during Combs' daily break from the Special Housing Unit, where he had already been placed following an NBC News exposé alleging he enjoyed illicit privileges behind bars — including access to contraband cell phones and other prohibited comforts. That report triggered at least two prison-wide raids, during which officials confiscated phones from several inmates, including Coke. Sources inside Fort Dix say many inmates blamed Combs for the increased scrutiny, and Coke, described by fellow prisoners as the "real kingpin" within the facility, confronted him directly.

Accounts differ slightly across outlets, but the core details remain consistent: the confrontation turned physical, Combs suffered a severe head injury, and both men were immediately sanctioned with two weeks in the Special Housing Unit. Combs was transported to a hospital in the early hours of October 10 and returned later that same day. His representatives have stated that they are working to confirm the exact circumstances of the incident, while the Federal Bureau of Prisons has not publicly verified the fight.

Coke, once the feared leader of Jamaica's Shower Posse, has been incarcerated since 2012 for racketeering conspiracy and conspiracy to commit assault with a dangerous weapon. His influence inside Fort Dix reportedly remains strong, and sources say the loss of contraband phones — a direct result of the NBC News investigation — was the final spark that ignited tensions between him and Combs.

Combs, meanwhile, is serving a 50-month federal sentence following his 2025 conviction on two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution. He had already been under heightened scrutiny after allegations of contraband access surfaced earlier this month. The reported fight marks yet another setback for the music mogul, whose legal troubles and prison conditions have drawn national attention.

Fee Waivers and a $9 AI Guide Aim to Expand College Access for Austin Students

By Villager staff



(AUSTIN, TX) - Austin's Free College Application Week has opened with a notable local innovation: a homegrown AI tool designed to help families navigate the increasingly complex admissions process. From **October 12–18, 2026**, every Texas public college and university is waiving undergraduate application fees for Texas residents who apply through **ApplyTexas**, part of a statewide affordability push that includes frozen tuition through the 2026–27 academic year.

At the same time, Austin-based **10X Innovations** has launched **CollegeAdmissionsAssistant.com**, a $9-per-month AI admissions guide built to support families who often face counselor shortages and cannot afford private consultants. Texas schools average roughly **400 students per counselor**, leaving many families to manage applications alone. The platform helps users build college lists, research admissions requirements, organize recommendation letters, track deadlines, and generate structured essay outlines based on a student's academic and extracurricular profile.

More than **260,000 applications** were submitted during the inaugural Free College Application Week in 2025, and the state aims for **350,000** this year. With fees waived and a new low-cost planning tool available, Texas is attempting to widen access to higher education while reducing the financial and logistical barriers that often shape who applies—and who doesn't.

Austin Celebrates National Coming Out Day

By Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) - Austin marked **National Coming Out Day, October 11th,** with a citywide celebration of visibility, pride, and solidarity, highlighting the city's ongoing commitment to **LGBTQ+** inclusion. The day's centerpiece was a **rainbow ribbon-cutting ceremony** at City Hall, where local officials, activists, and community members gathered to unveil a new mural titled "Out in Austin." The artwork, created by local queer artists, features vibrant portraits of residents alongside affirmations of self-expression and belonging.

Events extended across the city — from drag brunches and storytelling circles to youth-led panels on mental health and identity. The **Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce** hosted a networking mixer spotlighting queer-owned businesses, while the **Waterloo Greenway Conservancy** held an evening concert celebrating queer musicians and allies.

Organizers emphasized that Coming Out Day is not only about personal courage but also about community support. As one speaker put it, "Visibility is power — and Austin shows up for its people."

The celebrations underscored Austin's reputation as a progressive hub where pride is woven into civic life, affirming that the city's LGBTQ+ community remains both visible and vital.

Austin City Council Candidate Confronts Scrutiny Over Past Termination from City Employment

By Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) — City Council candidate **Katie Kam** is facing renewed public scrutiny after investigative reporting surfaced documents detailing her termination from a city position during her probationary period in 2025. The revelations have injected an unexpected personnel-record controversy into an already crowded election cycle, prompting questions about transparency, workplace accountability, and the role of past employment history in evaluating candidates for public office.

Kam, who is running for the District 7 seat, previously worked in a mid-level administrative role within the City of Austin. According to records obtained through public-information requests, she was dismissed during her probationary period following documented concerns about job performance, communication issues, and failure to meet internal expectations. The documents describe a pattern of missed deadlines and inconsistent follow-through, though they stop short of alleging misconduct or violations of city policy.

The candidate has not disputed the authenticity of the records. Instead, she has framed the experience as a turning point that shaped her decision to run for office. In recent public statements, Kam said her termination exposed systemic weaknesses in city operations, including inconsistent training, unclear expectations, and what she described as "a culture that doesn't always set employees up for success." She argues that her experience gives her insight into how the city can improve internal processes and support frontline staff.

Kam has also tied her personal experience to her support for **Proposition I**, a ballot measure that would require regular external audits of city departments. She says the measure would help identify inefficiencies and strengthen accountability across the organization. "My story is not unique," she said at a recent forum. "There are hundreds of employees who feel unheard or unsupported. We need systems that work for the people who keep this city running."

Critics, however, contend that the termination raises legitimate questions about Kam's readiness to oversee complex city operations as a policymaker. Some neighborhood leaders have expressed concern that the performance issues documented in her personnel file could translate into challenges in managing constituent services or navigating the city's demanding legislative workload. Others argue that the issue is being overstated, noting that probationary dismissals are not uncommon in large municipal organizations.

Political observers say the controversy underscores a broader tension in local elections: how much weight voters should give to a candidate's employment history, especially when that history involves public institutions. Personnel records are typically confidential, but Texas law allows disclosure of certain documents when they involve public employees, creating a gray area that often becomes politically charged during campaign season.

The scrutiny comes at a pivotal moment in the race, as candidates work to distinguish themselves on issues ranging from housing affordability and transportation to public safety and city governance. Kam's opponents have largely avoided commenting directly on her termination, though some have emphasized their own administrative experience and track records within city or nonprofit organizations.

For Kam, the challenge now is balancing acknowledgment of her past with a forward-looking message. Her campaign has leaned heavily on themes of reform, accountability, and lived experience within the city bureaucracy. Whether voters view her termination as a disqualifying red flag or a relatable setback remains to be seen.



Katie Kam

As the election approaches, the controversy has become part of a larger conversation about how Austin evaluates leadership, how the city supports its workforce, and how personal history shapes public service. What is clear is that Kam's past employment — once a private matter — has become a defining issue in a race where every narrative carries weight.

Council Weighs Oversight Changes to Austin's "No Wrong Door" Homelessness Initiative Amid Concerns Over Police Interactions

By Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) — The Austin City Council is preparing to revisit one of the city's most ambitious homelessness-response programs after civil rights advocates and defense attorneys raised concerns about how the initiative operates inside the criminal-legal system. The No Wrong Door program, launched earlier this year to reduce repeat emergency calls and connect high-needs residents with coordinated care, has shown early signs of success. But questions about police involvement, jail-based interactions, and the absence of formal community oversight have prompted Council members to consider structural changes.

The program was designed to identify "high utilizers" — individuals who frequently cycle through emergency rooms, shelters, crisis centers, and police encounters — and connect them with intensive case management and housing-focused support. According to city data presented at a recent work session, crisis contacts among the program's initial cohort dropped **31 percent** between May and August, a reduction city staff described as "significant and encouraging." The early results suggest the model is helping stabilize residents who have historically struggled to access consistent services.

Yet the program's reliance on Austin Police Department (APD) referrals has drawn scrutiny. Attorneys with the ACLU of Texas and local defense organizations say they have documented instances in which APD officers discussed No Wrong Door participation with individuals while they were in jail or in the midst of criminal proceedings. Advocates argue that conversations in custodial settings can blur the line between voluntary service engagement and perceived pressure from law enforcement, especially for people experiencing homelessness who may already distrust police interactions.

Council Member José Velásquez, whose district includes several neighborhoods with high homelessness-response activity, has introduced a resolution calling for the creation of a **Community Advisory Group** to provide independent oversight. The proposed body would include representatives from civil rights organizations, homelessness-service providers, behavioral-health experts, and people with lived experience. Velásquez said the advisory group would help "close blind spots" in the program's design and ensure that service coordination remains separate from criminal-legal processes.

"We're seeing promising outcomes, but we need to make sure the program is accountable to the community it's meant to serve," Velásquez said during the work session. "That means transparency, safeguards, and voices at the table who understand how these systems intersect."

City staff acknowledged the concerns and emphasized that the program's intent is strictly supportive, not punitive. They noted that APD's role is limited to identifying individuals who frequently come into contact with emergency services, not determining eligibility or directing case management. Still, staff agreed that clearer guidelines and community oversight could strengthen trust and improve outcomes.

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Falling Immunization Rates Fuel Record Measles Spread Across U.S.

By Villager staff

(VILLAGER) - The United States is confronting its largest measles epidemic in more than three decades, a nationwide public health emergency that has strained hospitals, disrupted schools, and reignited debate over declining childhood vaccination rates. Federal officials confirmed more than 4,000 measles cases this year—surpassing the combined totals of 2024 and 2025—and warned that the country is now at serious risk of losing its measles-elimination status, a designation the U.S. has held since 2000.

The surge reflects a convergence of factors that epidemiologists have tracked for years: falling MMR vaccination coverage among young children, widening pockets of undervaccinated communities, and persistent misinformation about vaccine safety. While measles remains a vaccine-preventable disease, it is among the most contagious pathogens known; nine out of ten unvaccinated people exposed will become infected, a dynamic that has fueled rapid spread across dozens of states.

Federal surveillance data show confirmed cases in 47 jurisdictions, with outbreaks in major metropolitan areas as well as rural counties where vaccination rates have dipped below the 95 percent threshold needed to prevent sustained transmission. More than 96 percent of this year's cases are tied to active outbreaks rather than isolated travel-related infections, a sign that domestic transmission chains have become entrenched. At least two deaths have been confirmed nationally, and several states—including Pennsylvania—have reported additional measles-associated fatalities.

Hospitals in multiple regions have reported spikes in pediatric admissions, with roughly one in ten patients requiring hospitalization for complications such as pneumonia, dehydration, or encephalitis. Public health departments have issued repeated alerts urging clinicians to test rash illnesses, isolate suspected cases, and verify vaccination status among children and adults.

The epidemic's trajectory has raised alarms inside the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where officials have deployed staff to assist state investigations and reinforce vaccination outreach. The Pan American Health Organization is expected to review the U.S. elimination status later this year, a process that could formally acknowledge the country's loss of sustained measles control if transmission continues.

The resurgence has also intensified political scrutiny. Governors and local officials have clashed over school exclusion policies, emergency vaccination clinics, and the role of state health departments in countering misinformation. Nationally, kindergarten MMR coverage has fallen to 92.4 percent, a decline that experts say reflects both pandemic-era disruptions and ongoing ideological resistance to routine immunization.

Despite the scale of the epidemic, health officials emphasize that the path forward remains clear: vaccination. The two-dose MMR regimen is 97 percent effective, and communities with high coverage have largely avoided outbreaks. But restoring national immunity will require reversing years of erosion in public trust, a challenge that has become as central to the epidemic as the virus itself.

As the country enters the final months of 2026, public health leaders warn that the coming winter could bring additional surges unless vaccination rates rise. For now, the United States faces a stark reality: a disease once declared eliminated has regained a foothold, testing the nation's public health infrastructure and its collective resolve to protect the most vulnerable.



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On October 27, 2026 at 9 A.M., in the Travis County Commissioners Courtroom on the 1st floor at 700 Lavaca Street, the Travis County Commissioners will receive public comment on the Travis County District Clerk's Records Management Plan for Fiscal Year 2027, which includes the DISTRICT COURTS RECORDS TECHNOLOGY FUND (FUND 139) and RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND PRESERVATION FUND (FUND 127). To review a copy of the Plan before the hearing, contact Laura Jimenez of the Travis County District Clerk's Office at (512) 854-9737.

Travis County Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 1748, Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-3460 Fax (512) 854-7140

TRAVIS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM (HOME)

Invitation to Comment on the Draft of the Program Year 2025 CDBG/HOME Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

As part of Travis County's ongoing public engagement related to its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships ("HOME") programs, Travis County will make available to the public its Program Year 2025 CDBG/HOME annual report known as the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

The CAPER covers a period from October 1, 2025, to September 30, 2026, and describes progress made in carrying out the CDBG and HOME projects. This report will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to meet federal requirements.

COMMENT PERIOD AND DRAFT DOCUMENT

Comments will be accepted for 15 days **beginning November 4, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. and ending November 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.** Beginning November 4, 2026, a draft document will be available for download on the Travis County CDBG page https://www.traviscountytx.gov/health-human-services/cdbg, and also available for review at any of the six Travis County Community Centers listed below:

Travis County Community Center at Del Valle	3518-D FM South 973, Del Valle, TX 78617
Travis County Community Center at Pflugerville	15822 Foothills Farm Loop, Bldg. D, Pflugerville, TX 78660
Travis County Community Center at Oak Hill	8656-A Hwy 71 W., Suite A, Austin, TX 78735
Travis County Community Center at Jonestown	18649 FM 1431, Jonestown, TX 78645
Travis County Community Center at Manor	600 W. Carrie Manor, Manor, TX 78653
Travis County Community Center at Central Austin	5325 Airport Boulevard, Austin, Texas 78751

PUBLIC HEARING

The public can provide their comments by participating in a Public Hearing scheduled for **Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.** at Travis County Commissioners Courtroom, 700 Lavaca St., First Floor, Austin, Texas 78701. Members of the public who wish to participate may appear in person or register in advance to speak remotely. The online registration portal will be open from 8:00 p.m. two nights before the meeting until 8:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting. Information and links to the registration form are available on the Commissioners Court webpage at: https://www.traviscountytx.gov/commissioners-court. The public can view the public hearing session online via a link that will be active by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the public hearing, by clicking on the Commissioners Court Voting Session link for the public hearing date at: https://traviscotx.civicclerk.com/web/home.aspx.

MAILING COMMENTS

The public can also mail their comments to: CDBG Program, Travis County HHS, P.O. Box 1748, Austin, TX 78767; or e-mail them to the CDBG program at: cdbg@traviscountytx.gov

Travis County is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. Please call 512-854-3460 for assistance. To request that an American Sign Language or Spanish interpreter be present at the public hearing, please contact CDBG staff at least five business days in advance.

Trump's "Best People" Promise Collides with Scrutiny Over His New Press Secretary

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) – "Hey, Trump? What's that about DEI and merit? With you, it's never been about "merit", always about race. It's always about loyalty. Look at your cabinet. Look at your press secretaries."

Donald Trump has long insisted that he surrounds himself only with "the best people," a refrain repeated across campaigns, rallies, and both of his presidencies. But the controversy surrounding his new press secretary, Katie Zacharia, exposes how hollow that claim has become — and how the administration's vetting standards continue to erode under the weight of political loyalty.

According to reporting from The Guardian, Zacharia "describes herself as a lawyer but no public record shows she has been licensed in the US states where she resided". That single sentence is devastating. It doesn't allege a minor résumé embellishment; it raises the possibility that the White House's chief spokesperson — the public face of presidential messaging — may have misrepresented a core professional credential with no evidence to support it.

For any administration, this would be a serious lapse. For Trump, it's a direct contradiction of his signature boast.

Trump's "best people" mantra has always served as both shield and slogan: a way to deflect criticism by implying that his personnel choices are unimpeachable, and a way to reassure supporters that competence is baked into his governance. Yet his record tells a different story. Across both terms, Trump has cycled through aides, advisers, Cabinet secretaries, and communications staff at a pace unprecedented in modern politics. Many have departed under clouds of scandal, ethical investigations, or public embarrassment. Others were appointed despite thin qualifications, chosen primarily for loyalty rather than expertise.

Zacharia's situation fits squarely into that pattern. The role of press secretary demands credibility — not just with reporters, but with the public. When the administration's spokesperson claims a professional status that cannot be verified, it undermines the very authority the position is meant to project. It also raises questions about the vetting process: Did the administration fail to check her credentials, or did it simply not care?

Either answer contradicts Trump's insistence that he hires only top-tier talent.

The deeper issue is not Zacharia alone, but what her appointment represents. Trump's personnel strategy has increasingly favored ideological alignment and personal loyalty over competence. The result is a government staffed by individuals who may be politically useful but professionally untested — or, in this case, unverifiable. When the White House's own messaging apparatus is led by someone whose résumé cannot withstand basic scrutiny, it signals a broader disregard for standards that should be nonnegotiable in public service.

Trump's claim that he hires "the best people" has always been aspirational at best. With Zacharia, it becomes impossible to take seriously. The contradiction is not subtle; it is structural. An administration that prizes loyalty above qualification will inevitably produce controversies like this one. And each time it happens, the gap between Trump's rhetoric and reality grows evermore wider.

Wambsganss' Pivot Draws Scrutiny Over Long-Standing Conservative Alliances

By Villager staff



Leigh Wambsganss



Taylor Rehmet

(FT WORTH, TX) - Republican Leigh Wambsganss has softened her "ultra-MAGA" branding as she faces Democrat Taylor Rehmet in a high-stakes rematch for the North Texas Senate District 9 seat. Once prominently aligned with Donald Trump — including a "Trump Endorsed" banner and photos with the president — Wambsganss has removed those signals from her website and signage, adopting a new slogan focused on "working families" instead.

Her shift follows a January special-election runoff in which Rehmet defeated her by 14.5 points, a startling result in a district Trump won by more than 17 points in 2024. Wambsganss says the rebrand reflects voter priorities, emphasizing her background as a working mother and her focus on property tax relief, including expanding the homestead exemption and limiting state interference in local taxation.

Rehmet, an Air Force veteran and union leader, continues to center his campaign on affordability — healthcare costs, property taxes, and increased school funding — arguing that economic pressures have worsened since the earlier election. His surprise win last winter was fueled in part by large swings among Latino voters, who moved sharply toward Democrats compared with 2022.

Strategists from both parties say Wambsganss' pivot is typical for a general election, though Democrats argue her distancing from Trump is disingenuous given her long history of support from prominent conservatives and major right-wing donors. GOP consultants note she must broaden her appeal beyond the Republican base, especially with Attorney General Ken Paxton's vulnerabilities at the top of the ticket.

Rehmet, meanwhile, has toned down earlier attacks and says he's focused on district needs rather than culture-war fights. Wambsganss counters that his policies are "far left," pointing to past support for rent stabilization.

With turnout expected to surge in November, both candidates are recalibrating — one by moderating her image, the other by sticking to a consistent affordability message — as they prepare for a closely watched rematch in a district once considered safely Republican.

Vance Moves to Invoke Wartime Authority for Fuel Expansion at Texas Refinery as Energy Costs Squeeze Economy

By Villager staff

(TEXAS) - Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday announced that the Trump administration will invoke wartime powers under the Defense Production Act to accelerate fuel output at the Delek refinery in Tyler, Texas, a move aimed at easing persistent energy-price pressure on households and businesses ahead of the midterm elections. Vance told supporters at a rally that the administration has authorized an expansion of the facility to produce "millions of gallons" of both commercial-grade and military-specification fuel beyond its current output.

The Defense Production Act allows the president to direct industrial capacity toward national-security needs, though the administration has not clarified whether the authority will be applied more broadly across the sector or limited to the Tyler site. The White House did not immediately respond to requests for additional details.

The announcement comes as gasoline and diesel prices remain elevated, averaging $4.34 and $6.28 per gallon, respectively, according to AAA data cited Tuesday. Analysts caution, however, that the move is unlikely to produce rapid relief. Andy Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates, said refineries are already operating at maximum diesel output and that meaningful increases would require long-term investment, the restarting of shuttered facilities, or the construction of new ones—none of which can be accomplished quickly.

Global instability continues to drive volatility in energy markets. The ongoing war in Iran has pushed oil prices higher and disrupted regional infrastructure, while Ukraine's strikes on Russian refineries have further tightened supply conditions as the two countries remain locked in conflict.

The administration's decision to lean on wartime authority has already drawn scrutiny from critics who note that officials have repeatedly insisted the United States is not at war. Commenters and analysts have questioned the internal consistency of invoking emergency powers under those circumstances, and some have argued that the refinery expansion is unlikely to materially shift fuel prices before voters head to the polls.

As the midterms approach, the political stakes around energy costs continue to rise. Whether the administration's move will translate into tangible economic relief—or simply serve as a symbolic gesture—remains an open question.

Jason Mangum Named Assistant City Manager as Pflugerville Strengthens Executive Leadership

By Villager staff

(PFLUGERVILLE, TX) - Pflugerville has appointed Jason Mangum as its new assistant city manager, selecting a veteran public-sector leader from a field of nearly 140 candidates. The unanimous vote by the City Council reflects both confidence in Mangum's experience and the city's recognition that rapid growth demands a deeper, more specialized executive bench.

Mangum brings more than 25 years of municipal leadership, with a career shaped by service in parks and recreation, community development, and city administration across Texas. His background includes managing multimillion-dollar capital projects, expanding public-facing programs, and navigating the operational challenges that come with fast-growing communities. For Pflugerville — a city balancing suburban expansion, infrastructure strain, and evolving community expectations — his appointment signals a strategic investment in stability and long-term planning.

City officials emphasized Mangum's collaborative style and track record of building cross-departmental systems that improve service delivery. In a city where transportation planning, parks expansion, and public safety coordination increasingly intersect, the ability to integrate departments is a necessity. Mangum's experience positions him to support the city manager in overseeing these complex, overlapping priorities.

His arrival also comes at a moment when Pflugerville is redefining its civic identity. Once a quiet suburb, the city now faces the pressures of regional growth, commercial redevelopment, and shifting demographics. Residents expect transparency, responsiveness, and thoughtful stewardship of public resources. Mangum's appointment reflects the city's effort to meet those expectations with seasoned leadership rather than reactive management.

For longtime residents, the announcement may feel like another marker of Pflugerville's evolution — a reminder that the city's administrative structure must grow alongside its population. For newer residents, it signals a commitment to professional governance and the infrastructure needed to support a modern, expanding community.



Jason Magnum

As Mangum steps into the role, he inherits both opportunity and challenge: maintaining Pflugerville's small-town character while guiding the systems that support a city no longer small. His success will depend on how effectively he can bridge those realities, ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of the community values that have defined Pflugerville for generations.

"Airbnb is doing something that's never been done here before."

— Grandma Wisdom

$6.4 million to help build 201 homes here in St. John

Airbnb is proud to support the St. John redevelopment project, which has broken ground on the construction of 201 new homes in the neighborhood. These homes cannot be used as short-term rentals.



From left to right: District 4 Councilmember Chito Vela, Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky, Grandma Wisdom, former Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and Adam Powell, Executive Director of the Austin History Center Association, at the project announcement at the Austin Central Library.

Learn more at Airbnb.com/housing

EARLY VOTING STARTS MONDAY, OCTOBER 19-30TH

See What's On The Ballot and Bring It With You!

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YOUR POCKET POLL

Everything you need for the 2026 Texas Midterm.

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✓ PAPER = YES ✕ PHONE = NO

YOUR DISTRICTS

COUNTY	TRAVIS
US HOUSE	37
TX HOUSE	46
TX SENATE	14

YOUR CANDIDATES

FEDERAL

U.S. SENATE
- ☐ James Talarico (D)
- ☐ Ken Paxton (R)
- ☐ Ted Brown (L)

U.S. HOUSE • DISTRICT 37
- ☐ Greg Casar (D)
- ☐ Lauren Peña (R)

STATE

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS
- ☐ Gina Hinojosa (D)
- ☐ Greg Abbott (R)
- ☐ Pat Dixon (L)

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
- ☐ Vikki Goodwin (D)
- ☐ Dan Patrick (R)
- ☐ Anthony Cristo (L)
- ☐ Kevin McCormick (G)

ATTORNEY GENERAL
- ☐ Nathan Johnson (D)
- ☐ Mayes Middleton (R)
- ☐ Tom Oxford (L)

COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
- ☐ Sarah Eckhardt (D)
- ☐ Don Huffines (R)
- ☐ V. Alonzo Echavarria-Garza (L)
- ☐ Shehla Faizi (G)

COMMISSIONER OF GENERAL LAND OFFICE
- ☐ Benjamin Flores (D)
- ☐ Dawn Buckingham (R)
- ☐ Neill Snider (L)

COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE
- ☐ Clayton Tucker (D)
- ☐ Nate Sheets (R)
- ☐ Austin R. Kelly (L)
- ☐ Alfred Molison (G)

RAILROAD COMMISSIONER
- ☐ Jon Rosenthal (D)
- ☐ Bo French (R)
- ☐ Arthur DiBianca (L)

TX STATE HOUSE • DISTRICT 46 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Sheryl Cole (D)

STATE COURTS

TX SUPREME COURT • CHIEF JUSTICE
- ☐ Maggie Ellis (D)
- ☐ Jimmy Blacklock (R)

TX SUPREME COURT • PLACE 2
- ☐ Chari Kelly (D)
- ☐ James Sullivan (R)

TX SUPREME COURT • PLACE 7
- ☐ Kristen Hawkins (D)
- ☐ Kyle Hawkins (R)

TX SUPREME COURT • PLACE 8
- ☐ Gisela Triana (D)
- ☐ Brett Busby (R)

COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS • PLACE 3
- ☐ Okey Anyiam (D)
- ☐ Thomas Smith (R)
- ☐ Mark Ash (L)

COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS • PLACE 4
- ☐ Audra Riley (D)
- ☐ Kevin Patrick Yeary (R)

COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS • PLACE 9
- ☐ Holly Taylor (D)
- ☐ John Messinger (R)

3RD COURT OF APPEALS • CHIEF JUSTICE
- ☐ Darlene Byrne (D)
- ☐ Cory Liu (R)

15TH COURT OF APPEALS • CHIEF JUSTICE
- ☐ Jerry Zimmerer (D)
- ☐ Scott Brister (R)

15TH COURT OF APPEALS • PLACE 2
- ☐ Tom Baker (D)
- ☐ Scott Field (R)

15TH COURT OF APPEALS • PLACE 3
- ☐ Marc Meyer (D)
- ☐ April Farris (R)

TRAVIS COUNTY

DISTRICT COURT • 147TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Cliff Brown (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 201ST UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Amy Clark Meachum (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 250TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Kennon Wooten (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 261ST UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Daniella Deseta Lyttle (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 299TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Karen Sage (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 331ST UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Chantal Eldridge (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 403RD UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Brandy Mueller (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 419TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Catherine Mauzy (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 455TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Laurie Eiserloh (D)

DISTRICT COURT • 459TH UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Maya Guerra Gamble (D)

TRAVIS COUNTY JUDGE UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Andy Brown (D)

COURT AT LAW NO. 1 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Todd Wong (D)

COURT AT LAW NO. 2 UNOPPOSED

COURT AT LAW NO. 3 UNOPPOSED

COURT AT LAW NO. 4 UNOPPOSED

COURT AT LAW NO. 5 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Mary Ann Espiritu (D)

COURT AT LAW NO. 6 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Denise Hernández (D)

COURT AT LAW NO. 7 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Elisabeth A. Earle (D)

PROBATE COURT NO. 1 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Guy Herman (D)

TRAVIS COUNTY DISTRICT CLERK UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Velva Price (D)

TRAVIS COUNTY CLERK UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Dyana Limon-Mercado (D)

TRAVIS COUNTY TREASURER UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Dolores Ortega Carter (D)

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE • PRECINCT 1 UNOPPOSED
- ☐ Ciara Parks (D)

KEY DATES

REGISTER BY	EARLY VOTING	ELECTION DAY	POLL HOURS
~~Oct 6~~ 2026	Oct 19–30 2026	Nov 3 2026	7A–7P Election Day