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BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES
by order of Presidio County

City Secretary Kelly Perez resigns

By Mary Cantrell
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MARFA — Marfa City Council accepted the resignation of City Secretary Kelly Perez last week. Perez has served as the city secretary since August 2021 and has been filling in as interim city manager on and off since the resignation of Mandy Roane in September 2024.

In her letter of resignation to council, Perez wrote that the past 11 months have "been quite the roller coaster" juggling both jobs. "Even through all the challenges, I've thoroughly enjoyed serving my community. Marfa is unique, and I hope I left a positive impression on the citizens I've been able to serve," Perez wrote. "The decision to leave the City of Marfa hasn't been easy. However, I am trusting God's plan for my life and am ready for my next adventure."

Perez's last day with the city will be September 19. She has agreed to be available by phone for 30 days after that to assist with ongoing projects. Perez will be staying in the area and starting a new remote job.

Council members were reluctant to accept her resignation on Thursday of last week, expressing their gratitude for her dedication to the city over the years.

"Thank you so much for stepping up and helping the city these past four years. You've really been a go-getter," Mayor Manny Baeza said. "I really wish you well in your future endeavors. It has meant a lot; you're going to be missed over here."

"I'm very sorry that you're leaving us, but you're going to be going on to great things," Councilmember Mark Morrison added. "Thank you very much for everything."

Council did not discuss plans for hiring a city secretary to replace Perez, but the search for the new city manager is still ongoing. There will be a gap between when Perez leaves and when a new city manager can start. Council moved on Thursday to schedule interviews with three city manager candidates.

Last month council assessed the 13 total applicants with a hiring rubric generated by Councilmember Travis Acreman, which weighed candidates based on several factors like education and municipal experience — including grants, finance and economic development, human resources, parks, planning and more. Perez said the council was unanimous on their top seven candidates. Of the top seven, three responded to requests for an interview, she said.

Following a council member exchange about focusing on hiring a man for the job — which prompted citizen outrage and concerns over legal liability — the council decided to dissolve a previously formed hiring committee, utilize the hiring rubrics and open the city manager interviews up to the public to witness. The city manager interviews will take place in the context of a special meeting; the public will be able to attend but not comment or speak.



Clowning Around

Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Liv Mershon, performing with Marfa Live Arts, interacts with Marfa Lights Festival parade goer Mary Ella Carrillo.

Commissioner vows to keep parks open as others react to defunding news

By Mary Cantrell
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MARFA — In the days following Presidio County's decision to defund the Marfa Golf Course and Vizcaino Park effective October 1, County Commissioner Deirdre Hisler, whose precinct includes the facilities, is vowing to keep the parks open with the help of the community.

"Just because it's defunded, it is still a public asset. I have no intention of locking any gate," Hisler said. "In the interest of doing the right thing, I'm going to come up with a plan."

She said she is in contact with several entities including the Marfa Golf Association, Marfa ISD, Los Yonke Gallos de Marfa sandlot baseball team and the City of Marfa about next steps. Figuring out who is going to pay water and electricity bills to keep the facilities maintained until a lessee can be located is the most pressing need, Hisler said. It was previously stated by County Attorney Blair Park that a request for proposals (RFP) process for a lease, or leases, would take at least 5-6 months to properly execute.

"We — as a community that want to preserve the investment that's already in Vizcaino Park, that's already in the golf course — have to come together to figure out how we maintain that asset," Hisler said.

Hisler, a previous regional director with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, is in the process of locating individuals who are willing to put electric accounts in their names and pay bills. She also plans to approach the Marfa City Council to request water bills be waived for a year. So far, annual water costs from October 2024 to August 2025 for the golf course and Vizcaino Park are $1,150 and $760 respectively. There are also county-owned wells in the area. Annual electricity costs are coming in at $17,700 for the golf course and $3,600 for Vizcaino Park.

Hisler and County Commissioner David Beebe voted against defunding the county-owned parks during budget discussions last week, while Commissioners Margarito Hernandez, Frankie Ortiz and County Judge Joe Portillo voted in favor, arguing that tough cuts had to be made considering the county's dire financial situation, and they just couldn't justify the expense to South County taxpayers in Presidio and beyond.

"You have to, at some point, start to ask yourself, do I need it, or do I want it?" Judge Portillo told *The Big Bend Sentinel* this week, a sentiment he previously expressed during a lengthy budget discussion. "I recognize more than anybody that this isn't going to win me any support, but I stand by it's the right thing to do."

The county has been losing money on the facilities for years, with

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Texas and New Mexico reach settlement in Rio Grande dispute

By Sam Karas
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EL PASO — On Friday, Texas and New Mexico reached a settlement in a lawsuit that's stretched on for 12 years. The suit alleges that New Mexico made a habit in the second half of the 20th century of pumping too much groundwater, depriving river users downstream of the Elephant Butte dam — namely, farmers and municipalities around El Paso and Juárez — of water apportioned for them under the 1938 Rio Grande Compact between Texas, Colorado and New Mexico.

Texas originally filed suit in 2013 and named the state of Colorado as a codefendant, seeking "declarative, injunctive, and monetary relief," per court documents. In other words, the state of Texas wanted legal clarification on the state of the Rio Grande Compact 75 years after it was signed, given how much both the supply of and demand for water along the river had changed in that time. The federal government filed its own complaint a year later, reminding all of the parties involved that the government has a constitutional right to sign off on agreements between states. (This case is also made more complicated by a 1906 treaty that guarantees water deliveries to Mexico.)

These sprawling suits have been arbitrated in part by a "special master" — an expert appointed by a judge to sift through evidence and help move the case along. In the early stages, the special master recommended that the federal government's suit be tossed, but the Supreme Court allowed the United States to proceed with litigation.

In both Texas' and the United States' legal view, the 1938 Rio Grande Compact needed to be reevaluated to reflect the realities of modern agriculture. While many politicians in Texas shy away from policies that explicitly name climate change, a series of droughts starting in the 1950s prompted farmers to start drilling for groundwater — a process that these suits allege siphons water out from the shared supply before it can be delivered to downstream users.

Both the science of hydrology and legal frameworks around water

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News in Brief

School board sets Thursday closed session on charged teacher, possible board reorganization

MARFA — The Marfa ISD School Board will meet Thursday in closed session to discuss a "Personnel Investigation" and "Board Member Roles and Responsibilities," according to the meeting agenda. Those items are not open to the public, but the public comment section — which typically occurs at the beginning of every meeting — is still on the agenda, and any actions taken are voted on in public after board members return from closed session. The meeting will take place at 6 p.m. at the board meeting room at 400 W. Lincoln St.

A Marfa ISD educator — Rebecca Ontiveros, 25, of Marfa — was arrested on August 21 and charged with improper relationship between an educator and student, a second-degree felony punishable by 2 to 20 years in prison. Ontiveros was booked into the Presidio County Jail and released on a $75,000 bond the next day. Interim Superintendent Arturo Alferez told The Big Bend Sentinel last week that Ontiveros was on paid administrative leave as of the day of her arrest. He said the district is following standard procedure by placing Ontiveros on paid leave, and the move was not a decision the school board voted on.

The board extended a non-certified teacher contract to Ontiveros on August 18 so that she could teach two pre-kindergarten classes. Before that she served as a special education aide at the elementary school. Her mother is Teresa Nuñez, the Marfa ISD School Board president.

Sources knowledgeable of school board member discussions — who did want to be named because of the controversy surrounding Nuñez's role on the board — said the "Board Member Roles and Responsibilities" item will likely be a discussion on whether Nuñez should resign or step down from her role as the leader of the school board. Under Texas law, board members can't remove another member or force them to resign.

It is unclear whether Nuñez will be present for the personnel investigation and board member roles and responsibilities discussions or whether she will recuse herself on any votes related to the discussions. Nuñez and Alferez did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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Indiana men sentenced in Marfa real estate wire fraud scheme

By Sam Karas
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ALPINE — At the end of August, two men from Indiana were convicted of carrying out a wire fraud scheme targeting two victims: the prospective buyer of a property in Marfa and an escrow agent in Alpine. Titus Akindamini and Chidinma Akinyele were sentenced by Judge David Counts to 10 months and six months imprisonment, respectively. They will both also serve three years of supervised release and owe equal shares in court-ordered restitution of $60,000.

Akindamini and Akinyele were indicted by a grand jury in December 2024. Per court documents, the trouble began four years earlier, between December 2020 and January 2021, when an unidentified "Victim 1" attempted to purchase property in Marfa with the help of unidentified "Victim 2," an escrow agent in Alpine.

Sometime in December of that year, the email account of an employee of Victim 2 was breached and the digital intruders were able to access a chain of emails about the potential transaction. The scammers sent an email to the buyer, instructing them to transfer $60,000 by wire to an account at Fifth Third Bank in Indianapolis.

The buyer complied on December 16, and for the rest of the month Akinyele and Akindamini made withdrawals from the transferred money. The unnamed Victim 2 never received any of the money they were owed. It took a few weeks for Victim 2 to notice that the fishy email had been sent — by which time the damage had been done.

The grand jury indicted Akindamini and Akinyele who were initially both charged with "conspiracy to commit wire fraud" in addition to "aiding and abetting wire fraud," all felonies. The conspiracy charges were later dismissed with prejudice.

According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), real estate transactions are "a perfect storm" for fraud, because listing data is easily accessible and high-stakes communications largely take place over email and text. As technologies like artificial intelligence take off, scammers' ability to impersonate potential victims grows more sophisticated by the day.

Numbers suggest that rates of these crimes are increasing. In 2020, nearly 14,000 people nationwide were victims of wire fraud, with losses estimated at more than $213 million. The NAR describes the type of scam run by Akindamini and Akinyele as "business email compromise," a specific subset of this type of financial crime in which fraudsters gain access to an account and assume the identity of the agent to initiate a wire transfer.

The NAR offers a few tips to avoid this type of fraud: keep your operating system and security software up to date, and be careful about opening attachments or downloading files from emails. Never email your financial information. If you have to give financial information out over the internet, make sure the site is secure. First-time buyers can be especially vulnerable to scams, so make sure to do your research and ask questions if a transaction feels off.

Their most important tip? "Confirm all wiring instructions in person," the NAR cautions. "It's really important to always confirm by phone with a known number before transferring any funds."

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Parks

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specifically the golf course's expenditures exceeding revenues by around $97,000 in 2023, $77,000 in 2024 and $64,000 in 2025. The county's 2026 proposed budget anticipated around a $215,000 loss from both parks.

But Hisler — after learning the parks could be on the chopping block — identified, with the help of golf course stakeholders, several glaring areas where the business could be improved, including updating membership fees that had remained stagnant for 12 years, turning the cash-only facility into one that accepts credit cards, putting a formal concessionaire contract in place and other key revenue-generating changes. She noted in Commissioners Court that revenues had increased over the past three years — from around $55,000 in 2023 to $79,000 in 2025. But her request to have a year to turn things around was ultimately denied.

Several Marfa residents spoke to the importance of the 1960s-established golf course as a valuable recreational space for individuals and families as well as a community hub that raises funds for scholarships and locals' medical bills. The decision to defund the parks effectively put three county employees, including David Francis, the caretaker of the entire North Park area, out of work. Golf course employees Ernest Villarreal and Mario Ontiveroz are eligible for retirement, Hisler said, and she has urged them to meet with the county's human resources director. But both have expressed interest in working on a volunteer-basis for the time being, Hisler said.

"I respect both of them for saying, 'How can we help you to make sure that this golf course does not die?" Hisler said. "Those are public spaces, and my position is that we will keep them open on volunteer efforts until I can get into a lease agreement."

Beebe said that while there is no denying the fact that the county is broke and can no longer afford to provide public services that don't provide a return on investment, he strongly disagreed with Portillo's process of suddenly "taking a machete" to the parks with no subsequent plan in place, rather than slowly sunsetting the operations or maintaining the asset's value while seeking a lessee.

"It's really disrespectful to the community. It's really disrespectful to the employees, to the history. It's disrespectful to the county," Beebe said. "I mean, honestly, it's grounds for dismissal."

"There's operational deficiencies," he added. "But the fact that Deirdre has not been given the chance to remedy those eight months into office when she actually has a plan that she's been working hard on is also highly disrespectful to her."

Many Marfa residents who spoke out on social media in the wake of the defunding decision, and several people that spoke to *The Sentinel*, said they took issue with what appeared to be Judge Portillo's leveraging of the "Marfa versus Presidio" approach. People were quick to point out that Marfa contributes more tourism and higher property values to the county's economy. Others noted in letters to the editor that parks seemed to be concentrated in Marfa and not spread out equitably across the county.

In a City Council meeting on Thursday, Marfa Mayor Manny Baeza said he was "disappointed" that no one reached out to him to ask for help keeping the facilities afloat, and what he saw as "frustrating" EMS inequities were on his mind.

"I hate to say this, but everything seems to benefit South County," Baeza said. "It's not Marfa versus Presidio, but their EMS gets $120,000. We get $65,000. We go all the way to Elephant Rock. We intercept a lot of patients from Presidio. We cover a lot of territory, but we're not treated equally."

He argued that the Marfa Golf Course brings money to the city because players travel to compete in big tournaments, thereby staying in hotels and visiting restaurants and shops. Baeza said he is willing to assess the city's finances to see where it can help with the two parks.

"We can't let that go, so let's see what we can do," Baeza said. "Because once they stop watering and everything else they're going to lose millions of dollars in that asset."

When asked about the "Marfa versus Presidio" argument, Portillo reiterated that the decision to defund the parks was primarily driven by the "need to tighten our belt," but brought up that North and South County do have different demographics he is considering; Presidio is lower-income, and the area is made up of several smaller communities including colonias, Candelaria, Ruidosa, Shafter and Redford, communities he didn't imagine wanted to pay for a golf course over an hour away.

"If I were to go to Redford and I were to tell them, 'Congratulations, this half of Redford, everybody south of the River Road, all your taxes went to a golf course — so my advice to you is, go play golf,'" Portillo said.

He said he "applauded" the recent Bull Barn lease that the county entered into with Ballroom Marfa — to turn the unused auction barn into an event venue — and he sees that as a viable direction for the Marfa Golf Course and Vizcaino Park.

"You had an asset that was sitting there abandoned then you have a nonprofit that comes and says, 'We have a vision.' I think the same can be done with the golf course and with Vizcaino Park," Portillo said. "It should be in the hands of a group that is passionate about either playing baseball or playing golf, and let them determine what it looks like and make a very generous lease for them to take a swing at it."

But those volunteer-run organizations — namely the Marfa Golf Association and the sandlot baseball team Los Yonke Gallos de Marfa, which started in 2007 — told *The Sentinel* that they both disagreed with and felt blindsided by the decision to defund the public facilities they utilize. Even in Hisler's best case scenario of securing a lessee, the previously publicly-run parks will likely be turned over to private management.

Felipe Cordero, president of the Marfa Golf Association, said Portillo failed to recognize the golf course as "a wellness program for the community," rather than a profit-generating enterprise, and his actions will be on everyone's mind in Marfa come next election cycle. In the meantime, the association is working with Hisler and generating fundraising ideas to keep the bare minimum going at the course, he said.

> *"It's really disrespectful to the community. It's really disrespectful to the employees, to the history"*

"Maybe he's got a plan, but I still think you gotta keep everybody in mind," Cordero said.

"When you're from Marfa, you learn to be resourceful," he added. "As long as we keep working at it, we will sustain it."

In a statement Gallos team managers Jerram Rojo and Cody Bjornson said the team was disappointed to hear that their practice field had been defunded by the county "especially after receiving the new scoreboard, which is one of a few park improvements we intend to address as primary users of the park and baseball field." County funds, in addition to a donation from El Cosmico, made it possible for the baseball team to buy a new scoreboard this year to replace a long-inoperable one. It has been delivered but has not yet been installed.

The Gallos have practices and games scheduled for the remainder of the baseball season which ends in early November, Rojo and Bjornson wrote, but "as of right now there isn't a concrete plan as to how Vizcaino will operate."

PUBLIC NOTICE
Brief Explanatory Statements of Proposed Constitutional Amendments Special Election, November 4, 2025

Proposition Number 1
(SJR 59)

SJR 59 proposes a constitutional amendment to establish two special funds in the state treasury to provide a dedicated source of funding for capital projects and equipment purchases related to educational programs offered by the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) System. The proposed amendment requires the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to manage the funds, including managing any investment activities related to the funds and making the funds available for use by the TSTC System. The proposed amendment authorizes the TSTC System Board of Regents to use amounts distributed by the Comptroller to the available fund to acquire land, construct and equip buildings and other permanent improvements, make major repairs and rehabilitations of buildings or other permanent improvements, acquire capital equipment, acquire library books and materials, make payment of the principal and interest due on any bonds or notes used to finance permanent improvements, or for any other purpose authorized by law. Under the proposed amendment, the TSTC System could not use the appropriated funds to construct, equip, repair, or rehabilitate buildings or other permanent improvements that are to be used for intercollegiate athletics or auxiliary enterprises.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the permanent technical institution infrastructure fund and the available workforce education fund to support the capital needs of educational programs offered by the Texas State Technical College System."**

Proposition Number 2
(SJR 18)

SJR 18 proposes a constitutional amendment to prohibit the legislature from imposing a tax on the realized or unrealized capital gains of an individual, family, estate, or trust. This prohibition would include a tax on the sale or transfer of a capital asset that is payable by an individual, family, estate, or trust selling or transferring the asset. The proposed amendment would not prohibit the imposition or change in the rate of an ad valorem tax on property; a sales tax on the sale of goods or services; or a use tax on the storage, use, or other consumption in this state of goods or services.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment prohibiting the imposition of a tax on the realized or unrealized capital gains of an individual, family, estate, or trust."**

Proposition Number 3
(SJR 5)

SJR 5 proposes a constitutional amendment to require the denial of bail pending trial for persons accused of certain criminal offenses. The proposed amendment would apply only to a person accused of committing one or more of the following offenses: murder; capital murder; aggravated assault if the person caused serious bodily injury to another, as defined by law, or the person used a firearm, club, knife, or explosive weapon, as those terms are defined by law, during the commission of the assault; aggravated kidnapping; aggravated robbery; aggravated sexual assault; indecency with a child; trafficking of persons; or continuous trafficking of persons. Under the proposed amendment, a person accused of one or more of these offenses must be denied bail pending trial if the attorney representing the state demonstrates by a preponderance of the evidence that the granting of bail is insufficient to reasonably prevent the person's willful nonappearance in court; or the attorney representing the state demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the granting of bail is insufficient to reasonably ensure the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense. A judge or magistrate who grants bail to a person accused of one or more of these offenses under the proposed amendment must set bail and impose conditions of release necessary only to reasonably prevent the person's willful nonappearance in court and ensure the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense. The judge or magistrate must also prepare a written order that includes findings of fact and a statement explaining the justification for the grant of bail. The proposed amendment specifies that it may not be construed to limit any right a person has under other law to contest a denial of bail or to contest the amount of bail set by a judge or magistrate or to require any testimonial evidence before a judge or magistrate makes a bail decision with respect to a person to whom the amendment applies. A judge or magistrate who determines whether a preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing evidence exists under the proposed amendment shall consider the likelihood of the person's willful nonappearance in court; the nature and circumstances of the alleged offense; the safety of the community, law enforcement, and the victim of the alleged offense; and the criminal history of the person. A person is entitled to be represented by counsel at a hearing described by the proposed amendment.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment requiring the denial of bail under certain circumstances to persons accused of certain offenses punishable as a felony."**

Proposition Number 4
(HJR 7)

HJR 7 proposes a constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the revenue derived from state sales and use taxes to the Texas water fund and to provide for the allocation and use of that revenue. The proposed amendment would authorize the legislature to allocate and transfer funds to accounts administered by the Texas Water Development Board. The proposed amendment also allows the legislature to suspend allocations of funds to these accounts during a state of disaster declared under Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the revenue derived from state sales and use taxes to the Texas water fund and to provide for the allocation and use of that revenue."**

Proposition Number 5
(HJR 99)

HJR 99 proposes a constitutional amendment to allow the legislature to exempt animal feed held by the owner for retail sale from ad valorem taxation. The proposed amendment would authorize the legislature to provide additional eligibility requirements for the exemption.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation tangible personal property consisting of animal feed held by the owner of the property for sale at retail."**

Proposition Number 6
(HJR 4)

HJR 4 proposes a constitutional amendment to prohibit the legislature from enacting a law that imposes an occupation tax on a registered securities market operator or a tax on a securities transaction conducted by a registered securities market operator. The proposed amendment would not prohibit the imposition of a general business tax measured by business activity, a tax on the production of minerals, a tax on insurance premiums, a sales and use tax on tangible personal property or services, or a fee based on the cost of processing or creating documents. The proposed amendment would also not prohibit a change in the rate of a tax in existence on January 1, 2026.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment prohibiting the legislature from enacting a law imposing an occupation tax on certain entities that enter into transactions conveying securities or imposing a tax on certain securities transactions."**

Proposition Number 7
(HJR 133)

HJR 133 proposes a constitutional amendment to allow the legislature to give surviving spouses of United States armed services veterans a property tax exemption on their residence homestead. The proposed amendment would exempt all or part of the property tax on the spouse's residence homestead if the veteran died from a condition or disease presumed under federal law to be service-related. The exemption would apply only to a surviving spouse who has not remarried since the veteran's death.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a veteran who died as a result of a condition or disease that is presumed under federal law to have been service-connected."**

Proposition Number 8
(HJR 2)

HJR 2 proposes a constitutional amendment to prohibit the legislature from imposing a state tax on a deceased individual's estate because of the individual's death, including an estate, inheritance, or death tax. The proposed amendment would prohibit the legislature from imposing a state tax on the transfer of an estate, inheritance, legacy, succession, or gift from an individual, family, estate, or trust, including generation-skipping transfers, if

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News in Brief

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Officers respond to shots fired outside bar Friday

MARFA — Police officers responded to a report of shots fired outside the Planet Marfa bar at 200 S. Abbot Street on Friday around 11:45 p.m, according to Police Chief Gilberto Carrillo. After interviewing witnesses, it appeared that a group of men had gotten into an altercation when the shots were heard, he said.

Carrillo said the investigation is still underway and no arrests have been made. The rest of the Marfa Lights weekend was peaceful with no public safety issues, he added.

Gate war lawsuit gets hearing

PRESIDIO COUNTY — Two of the county's richest men are continuing to battle over access to travel through a massive ranch southwest of Shafter, and a district court hearing last Wednesday at the Marfa Courthouse revealed more details of legal proceedings.

The hearing, before 394th District Judge Monty Kimball, heard motions to disqualify Rod Ponton — an attorney for defendant Johnny Weisman and his Flying W Ranch — and a plea by the Flying W to halt the case to better define which parties should be involved. The plaintiff — Cibolo Creek Ranch, owned by John Poindexter — sued in June after what it calls longstanding access to travel La Morita Road out of Shafter to its other properties to the east were blocked with gates locked by the Flying W. Both Poindexter and Weisman have made fortunes, the former in heavy trucks and equipment and the latter in state highway construction.

Cibolo Creek Ranch contends that Ponton should be disqualified from the case as a Flying W attorney because he served as the Cibolo ranch's counsel and an advisor on numerous real estate explorations over more than a decade. In an affidavit, Ponton disputed that argument and wrote that he was only contracted as counsel on one occasion to help collect debt on a sale of hay in 2018. All other dealings were informal and served to connect people who were interested in real estate transactions, he wrote. Ponton began serving as an attorney for Weisman in 2022, and Weisman bought that 66,000-acre Flying W ranch (formerly the Lely ranch) in 2024.

Attorneys for the Flying W testified that La Morita Road crosses several landowners' properties heading out of Shafter — land owned by the Rinehart family, a state-owned parcel, part of Big Bend Ranch State Park, and a plot of Borschig Ranch land, and that each of these owners and their heirs should be party to the lawsuit. Cibolo Creek Ranch filings disputed the need for additional parties because it said it had deals to cross those properties, and thus, only the access through the Flying W gates was in question.

In the lawsuit, Cibolo Creek Ranch asserts that La Morita Road is the only way to access their "Harper Ranch" property in which cattle there were under threat of starvation if they couldn't access them. The Flying W answered that two other routes — inconvenient but viable — were available from the east from either Casa Piedra Road or state park land. Cibolo Creek Ranch manager Tom Davis filed an affidavit with photos showing that both of those options did not connect and ended up in dead ends — one a locked gate of Borschig Ranch land and the other an expanse with no road and miles of desert scrub.

Judge Kimball has not ruled on either of the motions.

Rio Grande dispute

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rights have changed dramatically over the past 75 years. In 1938, the link between groundwater and river levels had not been fully established, and "capture" laws regulating the use of water on a particular property tended to grant the property owner free reign on groundwater, regardless of the impact to river levels.

Texas and New Mexico originally reached a settlement in 2022, which reframed the Rio Grande Compact from conditions in 1938 to reflect a period of study from 1951 to 1978 that would have updated the expectations of water deliveries to reflect a more modern reality. The states' "consent decree" was struck down by the Supreme Court in June 2024, with a slim 5-4 majority arguing that it unfairly boxed the federal government out of its role as an "agent" regulating the interstate compact. "We cannot now allow Texas and New Mexico to leave the United States up the river without a paddle," Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote for the majority.

Justices Gorsuch, Thomas, Alito and Barrett disagreed with this logic, saying that Brown's argument was a serious impediment to states' abilities to regulate water rights — conflicts over which are likely to intensify as the American West gets busier and more crowded. "I fear the majority's short-sighted decision will only make it harder to secure the kind of cooperation between federal and state authorities reclamation law envisions and many river systems require," Justice Gorsuch wrote.

In a story for *Inside Climate News* last fall, reporter Martha Pskowski interviewed a number of experts on the decision, including Burke Griggs, a professor of water law at Washburn University. "States that settle water disputes are now going to think twice," he told *Inside Climate*. "It's a real wrinkle we haven't seen before, where a non-party to a compact can intervene and then block a settlement."

The most recent settlement, formally announced last week, sets revised formulas for different entities that have a stake in the Rio Grande and an agreement for New Mexico to cut back on groundwater use. It allows New Mexico some wiggle room to transfer water rights to help meet demand both above and below the Elephant Butte Reservoir, which was at 3.8% full as *The Sentinel* went to press this week.

The Rio Grande runs dry most of the year between El Paso and Presidio, so river users in the Big Bend are unlikely to see a big boost from better-regulated water deliveries between New Mexico and Texas. If this most recent settlement doesn't meet the same demise as the one drafted in 2022, the real change that folks along the river may notice in the coming years is in the realm of case law — this sprawling, decade-plus long suit is likely to have an impact on how states regulate their water use going forward. "Of course, when a river touches so many jurisdictions, disputes about water rights are bound to follow," Justice Jackson wrote.

PUBLIC NOTICE (CONTINUED)
Brief Explanatory Statements of Proposed Constitutional Amendments Special Election, November 4, 2025

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the tax was not in effect on January 1, 2025. The proposed amendment would also prohibit the legislature from increasing the tax rate or expanding the applicability to new parties of a transfer tax that was in effect on January 1, 2025. The proposed amendment would not prohibit the imposition or change in the rate or applicability of a general business tax measured by business activity; a tax on the production of minerals; a tax on the issuance of title insurance; a tax in existence on January 1, 2016; a tax on the transfer of a motor vehicle by gift; or an ad valorem tax on property.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to prohibit the legislature from imposing death taxes applicable to a decedent's property or the transfer of an estate, inheritance, legacy, succession, or gift."**

Proposition Number 9
(HJR 1)

HJR 1 proposes a constitutional amendment to change the amount of tangible personal property held or used for the production of income that the legislature could exempt from property taxes to $125,000 rather than the minimum amount sufficient to recover the costs of property tax administration.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation a portion of the market value of tangible personal property a person owns that is held or used for the production of income."**

Proposition Number 10
(SJR 84)

SJR 84 proposes a constitutional amendment to allow the legislature to create a temporary property tax exemption for the appraised value of an improvement to a person's residence homestead that is completely destroyed by a fire. The proposed amendment authorizes the legislature to prescribe the duration of the exemption and to establish additional eligibility requirements for the exemption.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to provide for a temporary exemption from ad valorem taxation of the appraised value of an improvement to a residence homestead that is completely destroyed by a fire."**

Proposition Number 11
(SJR 85)

SJR 85 proposes a constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to increase the amount of the exemption from property taxation by a school district of the market value of the residence homestead of a person who is 65 years of age or older or a person who is disabled from $10,000 to $60,000.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to increase the amount of the exemption from ad valorem taxation by a school district of the market value of the residence homestead of a person who is elderly or disabled."**

Proposition Number 12
(SJR 27)

SJR 27 proposes a constitutional amendment to change the membership and procedures of the State Commission on Judicial Conduct (SCJC). The proposed amendment would: (1) change the membership of the SCJC so that it is composed of six judges appointed by the Texas Supreme Court and seven citizens appointed by the Governor who are at least 35 years old, with both groups of appointees requiring the consent of the Texas Senate to be confirmed; (2) restrict the SCJC's power to issue a private reprimand (or impose a requirement that the person obtain additional training or education) to a person who has not previously been issued a private reprimand and in response to a complaint that does not allege criminal behavior; (3) require the SCJC to find that a person engaged in willful or persistent conduct that is clearly inconsistent with the proper performance of a judge's duties, or determine that there is other good cause, before issuing a public admonition or punishment; (4) expand the SCJC's power to order suspension without pay as punishment; (5) give the chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court the power to select the appellate-court justices to serve on a tribunal to review the SCJC's recommendation for the removal or retirement of a person from office, without any requirement that each court of appeals designate one of its members for consideration by the chief justice; and (6) direct the Texas Supreme Court and Governor to appoint SCJC members to initial terms of two, four, and six years starting on January 1, 2026, with the succeeding terms to be six years, so that upon completion of the initial terms, the SCJC will be composed of members serving staggered six-year terms.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment regarding the membership of the State Commission on Judicial Conduct, the membership of the tribunal to review the commission's recommendations, and the authority of the commission, the tribunal, and the Texas Supreme Court to more effectively sanction judges and justices for judicial misconduct."**

Proposition Number 13
(SJR 2)

SJR 2 proposes a constitutional amendment to increase the mandatory homestead exemption from property taxation for general elementary and secondary public school purposes from $100,000 to $140,000 of the market value of the residence.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to increase the amount of the exemption of residence homesteads from ad valorem taxation by a school district from $100,000 to $140,000."**

Proposition Number 14
(SJR 3)

SJR 3 proposes a constitutional amendment to require the legislature to establish a new state agency, the Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT). The proposed amendment would create the Dementia Prevention and Research Fund to be administered by DPRIT. Under the proposed amendment, DPRIT would be responsible for awarding financial grants for research on and the prevention and treatment of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and related disorders. The proposed amendment would also authorize the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to transfer $3 billion from the state general revenue fund to the Dementia Prevention and Research Fund.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment providing for the establishment of the Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, establishing the Dementia Prevention and Research Fund to provide money for research on and prevention and treatment of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and related disorders in this state, and transferring to that fund $3 billion from state general revenue."**

Proposition Number 15
(SJR 34)

SJR 34 proposes a constitutional amendment to affirm that a parent has the responsibility to nurture and protect the parent's child and the corresponding fundamental right to exercise care, custody, and control of the parent's child, including the right to make decisions concerning the child's upbringing.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment affirming that parents are the primary decision makers for their children."**

Proposition Number 16
(SJR 37)

SJR 37 proposes a constitutional amendment to provide that only United States citizens are allowed to vote in Texas elections.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment clarifying that a voter must be a United States citizen."**

Proposition Number 17
(HJR 34)

HJR 34 proposes a constitutional amendment to allow the legislature to exempt from property taxation, in counties that border the United Mexican States, the portion of a real property's assessed value that arose from the installation or construction of border security infrastructure and related improvements. The proposed amendment would authorize the legislature to define "border security infrastructure" and prescribe additional eligibility requirements for the exemption.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: **"The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of the amount of the market value of real property located in a county that borders the United Mexican States that arises from the installation or construction on the property of border security infrastructure and related improvements."**

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CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Abbott signs redistricting bill; lawsuit challenges it

Gov. Greg Abbott signed legislation redrawing Texas' congressional map on Friday. A lawsuit challenging the redrawn districts as being racially discriminatory was filed even before the bill became law.

The Texas Tribune reported that the redrawn map, which could give Republicans five additional congressional seats in 2026, has been challenged by two law firms filing on behalf of 13 Texas residents collectively called "the Gonzales plaintiffs."

In addition, the NAACP, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Mexican American Legislative Caucus have joined LULAC in two additional suits against Abbott that call the maps unconstitutional and "intentionally discriminatory."

Abbott's office defended the maps. Andrew Mahaleris, the governor's press secretary, said they allow "more Texans to vote for the candidate of their choice," noting that Hispanic Texans are increasingly moving away from Democrats.

A 2021 suit filed by LULAC over the maps drawn after the 2020 census is still pending in court.

House passes bill requiring sirens in some flood-prone areas

Flood sirens will be required in areas identified by the Texas Water Development Board under a Senate bill approved by the House last week. Under the measure, TWDB would have to identify areas that have a history of severe flooding. In those areas, either the county or city would be required to install and regularly test warning sirens, The Dallas Morning News reported.

SB 3 allocates $50 million over the next two years to help cities and counties pay for the sirens, but they must submit a proposal to receive funding. The move comes after the July 4 Hill Country floods killed at least 137 people, including 27 campers and staff members at Camp Mystic along the Guadalupe River.

"We must rely on proven technology like outdoor warning systems," said state Rep. Terry Wilson, R-Georgetown.

Certain foreign nationals now banned from buying land in Texas

As of Sept. 1, people with ties to China, Iran, North Korea or Russia have been banned from buying most Texas property, including farmland, homes and commercial property, the Texas Standard reported. People in the state on student or work visas from those countries may buy a single home to live in but are barred from purchasing additional properties.

Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, authored the bill and called it "the strongest protection national security bill of any state passed."

If a person violates the law, they could face a state jail felony and fines.

Two Chinese nationals living in Texas filed suit in July, arguing the ban violates constitutional protections.

"It's discriminating against Chinese people. It's discriminating against immigrants," said Justin Sadowsky, legal director at the Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance and attorney for the plaintiffs.

The suit was dismissed by a federal judge in August, but the plaintiffs have taken the case to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

New proposed ban on THC has stalled

A bill to ban hemp-derived THC products in the state has stalled with the state's top two officials at loggerheads over the issue. The Houston Chronicle reported that Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick is still pushing a ban after Abbott vetoed a similar bill in the regular session. Abbott called the first special session after vetoing the THC ban, arguing instead for a more regulated approach.

"The regulated market would be very comprehensive," Abbott said. "It would regulate it at the farming-based level, the wholesale level, the distributor and the retailer."

A total ban would affect more than 8,500 businesses across the state that sell hemp-derived products, some of which contain amounts of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis.

While Patrick and Abbott have largely agreed in the past on major issues, that is not the case with the THC ban. Patrick said this is "probably the biggest one we've ever disagreed on, particularly openly."

East Texas water export delayed by study

An attempt by a Dallas investor to export East Texas groundwater likely will be delayed at least two years after lawmakers approved a water development board study of the plan's effects. The Houston Chronicle reported State Rep. Cody Harris, R-Palestine, authored the bill after investor Kyle Bass applied for exploratory permits for wells that could pump more groundwater in Anderson and Henderson counties than was now available.

The Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer spans East Texas from Louisiana to Mexico, supplying many towns in that region with groundwater. The bill requires TWDB to determine how much groundwater can be pumped "in perpetuity" without affecting the local groundwater district's 50-year plan.

Harris has also filed legislation to overturn the rule of capture. That rule has historically allowed landowners to pump however much groundwater is below their property, even if it negatively affects their neighbors. He said he intends to address the rule of capture during the 2027 session.

"We really do need to take the interim and the full session to have those hard debates that are going to come," he said.



House OKs making ivermectin available without prescription

The House last week passed a bill that would make ivermectin, used primarily to treat livestock for parasites but sometimes prescribed to humans, available to Texans without a prescription. The Texas Tribune reported the vote came after a lively debate along party lines. Its sponsor, state Rep. Joanne Shofner, R-Nacogdoches, argued her bill championed medical freedom.

The drug gained popularity during the pandemic as a treatment for COVID-19 before a vaccine was available. Prior to the pandemic, it had been used as a treatment for humans carrying certain tropical or subtropical parasites.

If signed into law, ivermectin would not be on the counter but could be dispensed without a prescription at pharmacies, similarly to how cold and cough medicines like pseudoephedrine are given.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

Form 50-876

Statements required in notice if the proposed tax rate exceeds the no-new-revenue tax rate but does not exceed the voter-approval tax rate, as prescribed by Tax Code §§26.06(b-2).

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX INCREASE

This notice only applies to a taxing unit other than a special taxing unit or municipality with a population of less than 30,000, regardless of whether it is a special taxing unit.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	$ .073713	per $100
NO-NEW-REVENUE TAX RATE	$ .063713	per $100
VOTER-APPROVAL TAX RATE	$ .078141	per $100

The no-new-revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2025 (current tax year) tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) from the same properties in both the 2024 (preceding tax year) tax year and the 2025 (current tax year) tax year.

The voter-approval tax rate is the highest tax rate that Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the no-new-revenue tax rate. This means that Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) is proposing to increase property taxes for the 2025 (current tax year) tax year.

A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED TAX RATE WILL BE HELD ON September 25, 2025 at 3:00 PM (date and time) at Terlingua Fire & EMS 23250 FM 170, Terlingua, TX 79852 (meeting place).

The proposed tax rate is not greater than the voter-approval tax rate. As a result, Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) is not required to hold an election at which voters may accept or reject the proposed tax rate. However, you may express your support for or opposition to the proposed tax rate by contacting the members of the Board of Directors (name of governing body) of Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) at their offices or by attending the public hearing mentioned above.

YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE TAX RATES MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Property tax amount = (tax rate) x (taxable value of your property) / 100

(List names of all members of the governing body below, showing how each voted on the proposal to consider the tax increase or, if one or more were absent, indicating absences.)

FOR the proposal: Buddy Cavness, Valynda Henington, Dr. Laura Portillo, Reagan Reed, Angela Juett
AGAINST the proposal: None
PRESENT and not voting: N/A
ABSENT: None

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

Form developed by: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Property Tax Assistance Division — For additional copies, visit: comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax

50-876 • Rev. 1-24/5

Notice of Public Hearing on Tax Increase — Form 50-876

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) last year to the taxes proposed to the be imposed on the average residence homestead by Big Bend Regional Hospital District (name of taxing unit) this year.

	2024	2025	Change
Total tax rate (per $100 of value)	$0.066091	$0.073713	Increase of 0.007622 or 11.5% change
Average homestead taxable value	$153,358	$172,480	Increase of 12.5%
Tax on average homestead	$101.36	$127.14	Increase of $25.78 or 25.4% increase
Total tax levy on all properties	$1,600,182	$1,831,599	Increase of 14.4% or $231,417

Statements required in notice if the proposed tax rate exceeds the no-new-revenue tax rate but does not exceed the voter-approval tax rate, as prescribed by Tax Code §§26.06(b-2).

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

This notice only applies to a taxing unit other than a special taxing unit or municipality with a population of less than 30,000, regardless of whether it is a special taxing unit.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	$ .556440	per $100
NO-NEW-REVENUE TAX RATE	$ .311970	per $100
VOTER-APPROVAL TAX RATE	$ .556440	per $100

The no-new-revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2025 (current tax year) tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) from the same properties in both the 2024 (preceding tax year) tax year and the 2025 (current tax year) tax year.

The voter-approval tax rate is the highest tax rate that the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the no-new-revenue tax rate. This means that the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) is proposing to increase property taxes for the 2025 (current tax year) tax year.

A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED TAX RATE WILL BE HELD ON Septembers 16th & 23rd (date and time) at 6:00 PM at the City of Marfa Casner Room. Marfa , Texas (meeting place).

The proposed tax rate is not greater than the voter-approval tax rate. As a result, the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) is not required to hold an election at which voters may accept or reject the proposed tax rate. However, you may express your support for or opposition to the proposed tax rate by contacting the members of the City Council (name of governing body) of the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) at their offices or by attending the public hearing mentioned above.

YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE TAX RATES MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Property tax amount = (tax rate) x (taxable value of your property) / 100

(List names of all members of the governing body below, showing how each voted on the proposal to consider the tax increase or, if one or more were absent, indicating absences.)

FOR the proposal: T. Acreman, M. Cash, R. Lara, M. Morrison & E. Pallarez
AGAINST the proposal:
PRESENT and not voting:
ABSENT:

Visit Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

Form developed by: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Property Tax Assistance Division — For additional copies, visit: comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax

50-876 • Rev. 2-25/6

Form 50-876

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) last year to the taxes proposed to the be imposed on the average residence homestead by the City of Marfa (name of taxing unit) this year.

	2024	2025	Change
Total tax rate (per $100 of value)	2024 adopted tax rate .328250	2025 proposed tax rate .556440	(Increase/Decrease) of (nominal difference between tax rate for preceding year and proposed tax rate for current year) per $100, or (percentage difference between tax rate for preceding year and proposed tax rate for current year)% 69.52%
Average homestead taxable value	2024 average taxable value of residence homestead $151,810	2025 average taxable value of residence homestead $134,408	(Increase/Decrease) of (percentage difference between average taxable value of residence homestead for preceding year and current year)% -11.5% decrease
Tax on average homestead	2024 amount of taxes on average taxable value of residence homestead $498.32	2025 amount of taxes on average taxable value of residence homestead $747.90	(Increase/Decrease) of (nominal difference between amount of taxes imposed on the average taxable value of a residence homestead in the preceding year and the amount of taxes proposed on the average taxable value of a residence homestead in the current year), or (percentage difference between taxes imposed for preceding year and taxes proposed for current year)% 50% increase
Total tax levy on all properties	2024 levy $1,115,465	(2025 proposed rate x current total value)/100 $2,002,497	(Increase/Decrease) of (nominal difference between preceding year levy and proposed levy for current year), or (percentage difference between preceding year levy and proposed levy for current year)% 79.5%

For assistance calculating your property taxes you may call the County Tax Assessor Collector at 432-729-4081

The email address is ctac@co.presidio.tx.us

Opinion

Just wanted to send a quick kudos.

The publication of stories and reporting is awesome! There is so much great info here that I feel like a resident of Marfa. It's the highlight of my day when new articles come out. Please keep up the good work, and I'm buying one of those [Print is Not Dead] hats too.

Matt Garcia
New Braunfels, Texas

• • •

Dear Editor,

How do we, as a peaceful community, allow our local law enforcement to act well beyond their duties of "to protect and serve"?

Our police department is giving Marfa a most unfavorable reputation across Texas. On any given day, at any given time, there is someone pulled over on U.S.-90 or U.S.-67. It has also become obvious that they target out-of-towners, especially drivers with Mexican plates.

Does anyone feel safer with vehicles constantly pulled over? Does anyone like to be followed by law enforcement at night, coming out of restaurants and bars? Are minor traffic violations our most pressing issue in Marfa? I, for one, feel much less safe in Marfa than I did years ago.

Again, I ask, how do we, as a peaceful community, allow our public servants to act in such a manner? It seems our local law enforcement has lost sight of the meaning of "to protect and serve."

Manu Fresno
Marfa

• • •

Dear Editor,

On behalf of the Marfa Athletic Booster Club, we would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in and supported the 5th Annual Marfa Shorthorns 5K Stampede. Thanks to the incredible enthusiasm and generosity of our community, this year's event was a great success.

It's because of events like this and the people who make them happen that our student-athletes are able to thrive both on and off the field. We're especially proud of our Marfa cross-country team, who showed up and showed out with true Shorthorn spirit.

We would also like to recognize our top finishers:

— First Place Female and new women's champ: Seiko Dejima, with a time of 24:54

— First Place Male and overall winner: Edward Orona of Alpine, with a time of 18:55

Congratulations to our winners, and heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped organize, volunteer, or simply showed up in support. We can't wait to see you all again next year!

Go Horns!

Sincerely,
Lori Flores — President
Roxye Lara — Treasurer
And all of the Marfa Athletic Booster Club crew

• • •

Dear citizens of Marfa, I am writing this in response to last week's letter about current school board president Teresa Nuñez. I strongly disagree with the actions of her being called to step down from the Marfa ISD school board.

Last week's letter to the editor, even though not stated, boldly accuses Mrs. Nuñez of being a shady person due to the fact of the bad decisions from her family. She has done nothing wrong but upheld her position on the school board, yet she is being criticized and blamed for the actions of others.

I strongly believe that every single board member at Marfa ISD, its administrators, its faculty and its staff at both campuses have each student's best interest at heart. Her position is on the school board yet she is being criticized and blamed for the actions of others.

People tend to automatically blame the school board or the school administration for issues that are beyond their control which they could not prevent, yet all the blame is towards the school board and its president and interim superintendent, Mr. Alferez. These individuals are doing the best they can to educate our children to the best of their ability with the limited resources that they have due to funding.

I'm basically saying that if every single person in a position on a board or in an organization is blamed for family members' bad decisions then nobody would have jobs. Nobody would be asked to stay at their position, but I do not think that people are looking at that way. It is basically a witch hunt and they are going after only one person's head — a person that did nothing wrong but uphold her position on the school board.

I strongly ask that those that are judging Mrs. Nuñez for others actions really step back and look at the big picture, because we all have that family member that makes bad decisions, but it doesn't mean people should be asking for positions to be resigned from or step down from for actions that they weren't even a part of.

Once again, I'm very grateful for the school board, for the administration, for the teachers and for the staff for doing everything they can for our children and I stand behind every single one of y'all. But especially right now, I am behind the school board and Teresa Nuñez and hope that those that are judging see that what's being done to this poor lady is wrong and she gets to keep her position as president of the Marfa ISD school board.

David Gomez
Marfa

• • •

Editor,

Here's how Marfa School Board President Teresa Villarreal Ontiveros Nunez greeted me in line at the Dollar General on Sunday: I hear you're talking trash about me.

No, I explained to her, but in light of her daughter's alleged criminal legal troubles at Marfa ISD, it would be in the best interest of our students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school property taxpayers for her to step down.

If you know Teresa, it devolved from there.

And yes, earlier last week I told several board members and the acting interim superintendent that board leadership needs to change.

My family has been a part of the Marfa ISD family for 37 years. My three children graduated with honors from MHS. I was honored to have served on the board of trustees for seven years and as board president for four years. I speak from experience, both as a parent and as a public servant.

If only this was the only matter surrounding the school board president, Marfa ISD, and her family. In 2021, the school board president seats her brother on the board, and we all know how that turned out.

As for the state of Marfa ISD, student population is at an all-time low and district finances are in a tailspin.

Her ill-conceived $57 million bond issue failed miserably in 2022.

If there's a bright light that shines through the dark cloud of this school board president's actions, it is the Marfa educators who day in and day out put politics and all these other distractions aside to teach our children well. We owe them so much gratitude in these times. I can't begin to thank them for what they do.

It's time for a change in board leadership at Marfa ISD.

Sincerely,
Robert Halpern,
Marfa ISD trustee 2009-2016,
Board president 2011-2015
Marfa



OUR WATER MATTERS

The Brewster County Groundwater Conservation District

By Trey Gerfers
tgerfers@pcuwcd.org

The Brewster County Groundwater Conservation District (BCGCD) was created in 2001 through House Bill 747 and approved by the voters of Brewster County in a confirmation election on November 6, 2001. It is a fee-based (i.e., non-taxing) groundwater district that receives the bulk of its funding from the Brewster County Commissioners Court.

The district covers the entire county and is governed by a seven-member board of directors chaired by Joan Johnson. Sul Ross State University Professor Dr. Kevin Urbanczyk also serves on the board and contributes his expertise in geology and groundwater to the district's decision-making process. Other directors include Tim Leary, Tom Mangrem, Rush Warren, Colton Foster, and Ambrosio Valles. According to Johnson, one of the district's main goals is "to register all existing wells in Brewster County."

The district's most recent groundwater management plan states that the purpose of the district "is to provide a locally controlled groundwater district to conserve and preserve groundwater, protect groundwater users, protect groundwater, prevent pollution or waste of groundwater within the boundaries of the district and regulate the transport of water out of the boundaries of the district." In order to do so, Johnson is seeking to obtain "more data on the aquifers in our district by implementing a monitoring program." The regional aquifers, over which the district has shared jurisdiction with neighboring districts, include the Edwards-Trinity, Capitan Reef Complex and Igneous aquifers. The only other aquifer currently managed by the district, the Marathon Aquifer, is subject to the sole jurisdiction of the BCGCD because it is contained entirely within the boundaries of Brewster County. Although the Santa Elena Aquifer is also located within the district, it has historically been considered insignificant and very little data has been collected on it. This will change as the district begins the process of sponsoring a study in coming months.

According to Urbanczyk, one of the greatest obstacles to setting up the district's management system has been the "lack of access to strategically located wells for monitoring." In this regard, the district's stated goal to "research and provide more information to residents about the aquifers" could serve to educate the public in general, and well owners in particular, about the need for more monitoring as perhaps the most meaningful way to protect private property rights in groundwater. "Our district attempts public outreach via invitations to meetings, presentations to realtors, and occasional groundwater science presentations. Additional efforts, including a strategic planning process, are also underway," says Urbanczyk. Public outreach and the registering of wells will grow increasingly important in northern Brewster County because the district is receiving permit applications for water service requests from property owners in many areas of Alpine. This is resulting in more wells being drilled on small parcels for domestic purposes and placing further stress on the Igneous Aquifer, which is the primary source of water for Alpine and its surrounding residential areas.

> *"one of the greatest obstacles to setting up the district's management system has been the lack of access to strategically located wells for monitoring"*

Dynamic growth in the communities of Terlingua and Study Butte also poses challenges for the district. According to reporting by the Texas Tribune, the number of short-term rental properties in southern Brewster County jumped from 133 in 2018 to 399 in 2024. The Study Butte Water Supply Corporation has also seen sales more than double from 8.4 million gallons in 2014 to 18 million gallons in 2023. The Texas Water Development Board has classified 31 groundwater formations throughout the state as either major or minor aquifers. But the obscure Santa Elena Aquifer, which is the source of water for most of southern Brewster County, is considered "unclassified." With year-round and transient populations projected to increase throughout Brewster County, the district is seeking to expand its understanding of all aquifers under its jurisdiction "starting with the unresearched Santa Elena Aquifer," according to Johnson.

When General Manager Robbyn Hill recently retired, the district hired its intern Sydney Bauer to take her place. Bauer started as an intern with the BCGCD in the summer of 2023 and is currently working towards her bachelor's degree in geology from Sul Ross State University. She came to work for the district through the recommendation of Urbanczyk, who is one of her professors. In his capacity as senior research scientist at the nascent West Texas Water Research Center (WTWRC) at Sul Ross, Urbanczyk is working to open the center in collaboration with Interim Director Billy Tarrant and a 15-member steering committee. One of the intended goals of the WTWRC is to train the regional water workforce of the future, including groundwater district administrators. In many ways, Bauer's assumption of the general manager role at the BCGCD during her studies at the university could be a sign of things to come.

Trey Gerfers serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. A San Antonio native, he has lived in Marfa since 2013.

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Opinion

Presidio County needs leadership, not self-interest

Judge Portillo often tells us that when making tough choices, we should ask: "Do I want it, or do I need it?" Yet when it came to approving a pay raise for himself and his staff — even while admitting the county budget is failing — he decided his raise was a "need."

By that same measure, Marfa's golf course is not a luxury. It is a need for our community. It attracts visitors, generates steady tax revenue, hosts tournaments, creates jobs, brings families together, and offers healthy, outdoor recreation in a place where options are limited. Defunding it would not strengthen Presidio County — it would weaken both our economy and our quality of life.

Meanwhile, Judge Portillo has directed county funds toward projects and perks that benefit a select few rather than the people he was elected to serve:

• $48,000/year for grant writers — These grant writers have not produced enough returns for the county. Reports back to Commissioners Court have been sparse and vague. Meanwhile, a true "need"— an Elections Officer to handle the increasingly complicated voting process — remains unfunded, leaving already overburdened staff in the Clerk's and Tax Assessor's offices scrambling during every election.

• Luxury travel on taxpayer dollars – When traveling to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the International Bridge, Judge Portillo chose — on one occasion — the Waldorf Astoria, one of the most expensive hotels in the capital at more than $900 per night. For perspective: a single night at that hotel could cover the golf course's water bill for over a month or fund multiple community programs. In one of the poorest counties in Texas, this kind of spending is indefensible.

• $250,000 to consultants to assess the courthouse for repairs needed and plan a scope of work with no results yet — Judge Portillo authorized a quarter-million-dollar contract with McKinstry to assess the courthouse and annex for urgent repairs. The planning work was completed, but instead of moving forward with fixing the problems, he politicized the issue and launched a smear campaign, dragging the process out until it landed on the November 4 ballot. Taxpayers now wait while needed repairs go undone — a waste of both time and money.

• A failed push for a regional law enforcement center in Presidio — Judge Portillo lobbied for a new facility despite the fact that the county struggles to maintain the law enforcement resources we already have. His personal grant writers (the same $48,000/year group) submitted a proposal, but even Congressman Tony Gonzales saw through it and declined to fund the request. The county's real needs — better support for current staff and infrastructure — were ignored in pursuit of this vanity project.

• Efforts to defund veterans services and emergency management — Judge Portillo attempted to eliminate both the Veterans County Service Officer and the Emergency Management Coordinator, saying the county did not "need" these roles. But veterans rely on that officer to help them access benefits they've earned, and emergency management is crucial in a county that faces wildfires and power outages. These are not luxuries — they are essential protections.

• Prioritizing Presidio over Marfa — Judge Portillo repeatedly chooses to spend his time in Presidio rather than in Marfa, the county seat. By doing so, he avoids the daily oversight of county business and instead devotes energy to projects that benefit Presidio specifically. The result is a county judge who represents personal priorities, not countywide needs.

Judge Portillo's pattern is clear: his wants get funded. Our needs do not.

The Marfa Golf Course is not just a "want." It is a need for our residents, our visitors, and our local economy. If this county can afford raises, luxury hotels, and high-priced consultants, then surely it can afford to keep open a golf course that serves far more people and delivers far more benefit.

It's time for our leaders to honor their own words. Presidio County doesn't need politics as usual. We need fair leadership — and we need to keep our golf course.

And finally, a word of thanks to Judge Portillo. By threatening to defund the golf course, he has brought us together as a community to start asking tougher questions about where our money goes and what our leadership is really delivering. His actions have awakened a broader awareness, inspiring more residents to look closely at the progress — or lack thereof — that his time in office has produced. In that sense, he has done one thing we can all agree was needed: he reminded us of the power of a united and watchful community.

To be fair and respectful citizens, we now extend an open invitation to Judge Portillo: join us for a community discussion about these points — and any others he wishes to address. We can be found most days at the Marfa Golf Course, and we will gladly host him there at a time that fits his schedule. All we ask is for reasonable notice so that the people he serves can make time to meet with him face to face.

Signed,
Mario Ontiveroz, Eddie Pallarez, Eddie Barraza, Ronnie Ontiveroz, Craig Roberts, Chuck Simpson, Yvonne Zubiate and numerous other area golfers.

Letter to the Editor:

The decision to defund Marfa's golf course and Vizcaino Park has generated anger, finger-pointing and plenty of blame. But what concerns me most is not simply the loss of these parks — it is the lack of foresight and accountability among all county commissioners in handling the budget process, and the way this episode exposes the persistent inequities between North and South Presidio County.

Let's be clear: the county faces a $400,000 budget deficit, caused by a drop in revenues. Budgeting is never easy, but whether in a household or in government, basic needs must come first. Roads, safety, and public health are essentials; recreation, while valuable, comes after.

The budget-drafting process takes place over the course of many months. In fact, when commissioners approved the deficit-ridden 2025 budget, they were already beginning the process for 2026. They received a draft of the 2026 budget six months ago — ample time to work together on addressing the ongoing shortfall and to consider fair reductions across departments. Instead, they allowed the conversation to stall until the last minute, leaving only one last-minute option on the table: cutting the county's only two funded parks. Now, commissioners are blaming the county judge and the two colleagues who voted in favor of the cuts, as if the parks were "targeted." In truth, what happened reflects a failure of collective leadership — a failure to distribute responsibility fairly and to approach the deficit with solution-focused balance.

And yet, what has drawn the most outrage is not the structural inequities that divide our county, but the closure of a golf course. That is telling.

Marfa has long enjoyed two county-funded parks outside city limits and its municipal parks board has around $200,000 on hand to reimagine and maintain their facilities. (Vizcaino could be potentially taken over by the City of Marfa, but there hasn't been movement forward since 2023.) This is in sharp contrast with Presidio, home to about 60% of the county's voters and zero county-funded parks or subsidies. Its parks scrape by on a bare-bones budget supported by meager income from rentals, pool attendance and donations from within the community. That imbalance has gone unaddressed for years.

And these inequities don't even take into account our smaller population sectors — the rural communities, ranches and settlements scattered across the county. They, too, are part of Presidio County and receive even less consideration when resources are distributed. The focus on Marfa's loss obscures the reality that many communities have never had meaningful investment to begin with.

While I believe in the importance of outdoor spaces being paramount to community health, the truth is that parks are abundant in Marfa and almost nonexistent elsewhere in Presidio County. Adding Presidio to the county parks budget would be a step toward fairness, but it would still not resolve an approximately $400,000 deficit. We must face the reality of tough decisions — and we must demand equity in how those decisions are made.

The loudest anger over losing a golf course, while silence lingers around South County's lack of investment and the struggles of smaller communities, only highlights how deep the divisions remain. If we are serious about the future of Presidio County, then accountability must be shared by all commissioners, and equity — not entitlement — must guide our choices.

Christina Hernandez
Lipan Apache, resident of Presidio County

Gallego deserves more consideration

I read a discussion that blew up on Facebook about the City of Alpine's search for a new city manager. There was scuttlebutt that Alpine native Pete Gallego was not shortlisted for that position for his alleged lack of qualifications. (If true, all I can say is, "Wow!! Really?!")

If there is any truth to this, council should publicly justify the parameters used for Pete's exclusion from the shortlist.

Serving as a Texas state legislator for 10 years and then representing us in Washington D.C. as a U.S. congressman, Pete developed valuable lifelong connections across the width and breadth of the country in general, and Texas, in particular.

While serving in Austin, State Rep. Pete Gallego served as chairman of the Appropriations Committee, from which he delivered tens of millions of dollars for Sul Ross State University's growth and betterment, an institution for which he would eventually serve as president.

Pete provided the funding to make U.S. 67, leading from Alpine to Ft. Stockton, safer for all travelers by "straightening it out;" having TXDOT cut a path through the caliche hills. If you remember, U.S. 67 used to wind dangerously up and around the caliche hill, causing quite a few fatal car accidents over the years.

With U.S. 67 widened and straightened, travel is now safer for everyone. That's thanks to our Alpine native Pete's knowledge of local history and determination to improve our lives. These are but a few examples of the potential value Pete is bringing to our community.

As far as the day to day running of the city, there is extensive precedent for the city hiring assistant city managers to lighten the city manager's work. Pete's real value is his well established political connections across the state for funding. You can have all the plans and projects you can dream up, but without access to finance, nothing will come of them, unless the six city councilors are daydreaming about deepening their hands into the pockets of local property owners/tax payers.

When my father, Dr. Rangra, served on the City Council, they had turned their attention towards fixing our city's sewer system after solving and guaranteeing standard water pressure throughout Alpine. At that time, the council was looking at a six million dollar tab that would address all our sewer issues. Through critical financial connections, like those Pete brings with him, the city was able to secure $6 million in funding from the Texas Water Development Board, of which $3 million wouldn't need to be repaid because it would be converted into a grant.

BTW, if you're wondering why we still have sewer problems, it's because, for reasons not even the legendary Oracle of Delphi could penetrate, the City Council voted 3-2 to reject funding from the Texas Water Development Board. As a result, 13 years later, we're still wandering around, hat in hand, looking for funding while our sewer remains stagnant. I'm sure, perhaps, one of the sitting councilmembers can tell us why. Let me give you another example of how the right political connections benefit a small city like ours.

Ciro Rodriguez, when he was our U.S. congressman, and Pete, when he was Appropriations Committee chair in Austin, provided funding directly to the city, enabling it to build new sidewalks, stretching out from the truck stop on U.S. Highway 90 East, straight through past the post office. The importance of these sidewalks for our citizens confined to motorized wheelchairs means they can partake in our festivities like Gallery Nite and Fourth of July Celebrations and visit their friends and family with a degree of independence that cannot be undervalued. If it's true that Pete was not considered to be at the helm, a collective short sightedness couldn't see the incredible asset Alpine potentially had in hand.

With Kind Regards, Amit Rangra, **Alpine**

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg September 4, 2025

ACROSS
1 Made a landing
5 Mountains in seven South American nations
10 Pull with a hitch
13 Pronged connector's "gender"
14 Cut, as a turkey
15 "That's a good one!"
16 Web addresses
17 Erie ___
18 Pivot line
19 Nanny's scheduling clash?
22 Winter hat feature
23 Popped up
25 They're used to tap tablets
26 Beer-soaked frank?
29 Sixth sense, for short
31 IX - VI
32 Part of OED: Abbr.
33 Post nightmares in 2022, say?
37 Greek letter symbolizing density
39 Coastal inlet, or 27-Down backward
40 Toronto Raptors' org.
41 Gloomy kitty?
44 Collect over time
48 "Shucks!"
49 Taiwanese drink with tapioca pearls
51 Evolving preferences, and a clue to the starts of 19-, 26-, 33- and 41-Across
55 Like some farewells
56 Dickens' Heep
57 Objectives
58 Tall birds with small wings
59 "Somebody else!"
60 Frozen beverage brand
61 Rainy
62 Mean smile
63 Papas

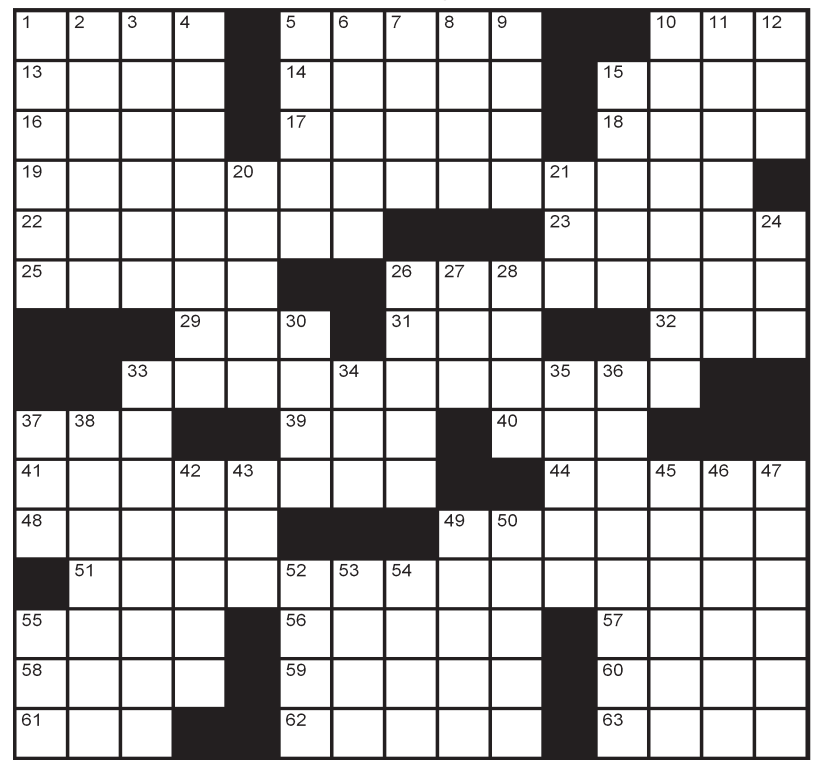
DOWN
1 Keeps entertained
2 Rope for a roundup
3 "Might as well give it a go"
4 Piloted, as a new jet
5 Ghana's capital
6 Image Awards org.
7 Fleming book title and villain
8 Actress ___ Rachel Wood of "Weird: The Al Yankovic Story"
9 Many a note recipient?
10 Rules for government duties?
11 "You're going down!"
12 Isn't any longer
15 Unshaven
20 Dedicatee of a Beethoven piano piece
21 Long.'s counterpart
24 Incubated item
26 The original Goldfinger?
27 What we breathe
28 Property claim
30 Paddington Bear's country of origin
33 Difficult problem to crack
34 "Whether ___ nobler in the mind ..."
35 Addis ___ (Ethiopia's capital)
36 Lead-in to advice learned from a parent
37 Nutritional stat hidden in "dinner date"
38 "Why's that?"
42 Studies, at Oxford
43 The original fidget spinner?
45 Ancient region that included Athens
46 Came across as
47 Replies with attitude
49 Mediocre effort
50 Catchall category
52 Revs
53 Tool for decreasing creases
54 Late time, informally
55 Hardly any

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

K	I	N	D	A			U	M	P	E	D			
O	N	E	I	D	A		S	U	A	V	E			
R	A	G	E	O	N		U	S	C	E	N	S	U	S
E	T	A	S		D	E	R	E	K		A	T	R	A
A	R	T		T	R	A	P		I	S	L	A	N	D
	A	I	R	I	E	R		I	N	K	I	N		
O	N	V	I	E	W		T	O	G	A		D	I	P
A	C	E	D		G	A	S	U	P		M	U	C	H
K	E	N		B	A	R	K		E	L	O	P	E	D
		A	L	A	R	M		B	A	S	I	C	S	
N	O	N	E	O	F		B	I	N	D		O	K	S
A	R	C	S		I	S	U	Z	U		O	M	A	N
P	A	Y	S	H	E	E	D		T	A	H	I	T	I
		S	A	L	A	D		S	P	I	C	E	D	
		O	D	D	L	Y			P	O	S	S	E	

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www.upuzzles.com

9/4 **Do Me a Flavor** *by Freddie Cheng*



Come worship with us



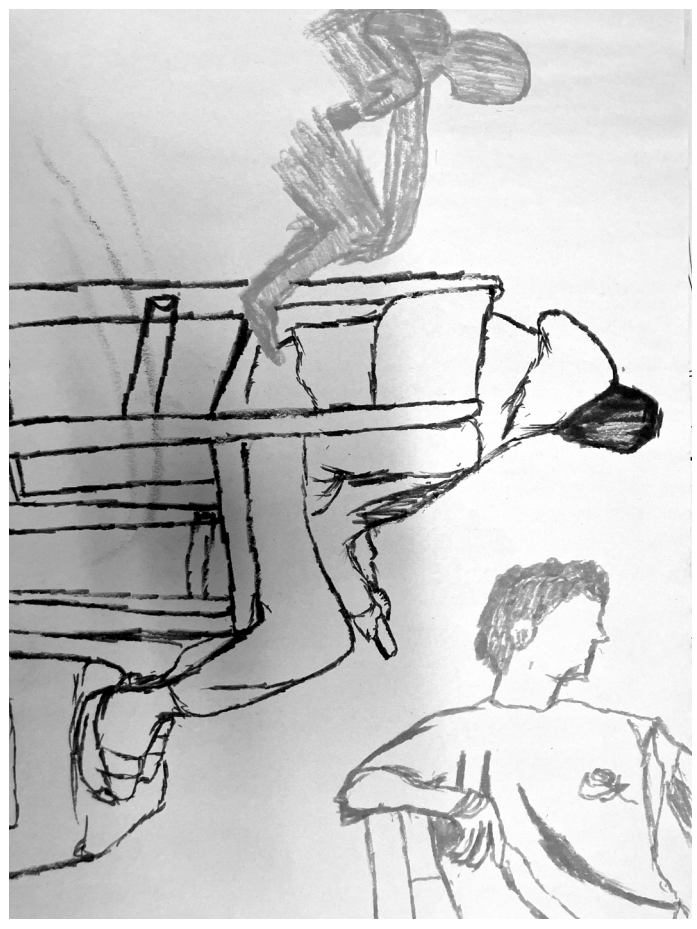
First United Methodist Church

Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

Sundays 9 am
Pastor Salvador Perales Jr.
110 W Washington Steet
Marfa 432-729-4534

Please recycle this paper

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Piper
Marker

Sudoku & Crossword puzzles:

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

				5				
4					2		9	7
	9	2		4			1	6
	8				5		4	
3				8				2
	2		1				8	
8	7			1		2	3	
2	1		6					8
				3				

8/28

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

7	6	8	9	5	1	4	2	3
4	3	1	8	6	2	5	9	7
5	9	2	7	4	3	8	1	6
1	8	7	3	2	5	6	4	9
3	5	9	4	8	6	1	7	2
6	2	4	1	9	7	3	8	5
8	7	6	5	1	9	2	3	4
2	1	3	6	7	4	9	5	8
9	4	5	2	3	8	7	6	1

8/28

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next to Marfa Country Clinic
432.729.4244
rxshopmarfa@gmail.com

ALTA MARFA WINERY
Texas Wine & Food
Friday - Sunday
5:00pm - 10:00pm
120 N Austin St.
instagram:
@altamarfa for updates

MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

4th: JH Volleyball in Balmorhea
5th: JH / HS Football vs Fort Hancock in Marfa
6th: HS Volleyball in Crane

West Texas congressman's 'Big Beautiful' cuts could harm rural hospitals in his district

By Josephine Lee
Texas Observer

Since it was signed into law on July 4, West Texas Republican Congressman Jodey Arrington has been broadly praised by allies for his stewardship of the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson called Arrington, who chairs the powerful House Budget Committee, "one of the most effective and consequential members of Congress." And Arrington has wasted no time touting his victory in West Texas, proclaiming it to be a "game changer for Rural America" and "a big beautiful win for West Texas." He's argued the so-called entitlement cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will "root out waste and fraud."

But many of his constituents in Congressional District 19 — a vast, deeply red rural district that includes over 30 counties — stand to lose access to both their healthcare and their local hospitals under the massive tax-and-spending bill, which will slash Medicaid and ACA spending by more than $1 trillion and knock 10 million more people off of insurance nationwide over the next 10 years, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates. Arrington's district is home to more rural hospitals than any other in Texas, and roughly a quarter of those are at risk of closing under the new law, according to a recent study. Six of the 25 hospitals in the 19th are at risk of closing, according to a June study by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina. Using data from 2020 to 2022, the study defined at-risk rural hospitals as those with three consecutive years operating with a negative profit margin or those which receive a disproportionately large share of revenue from Medicaid.

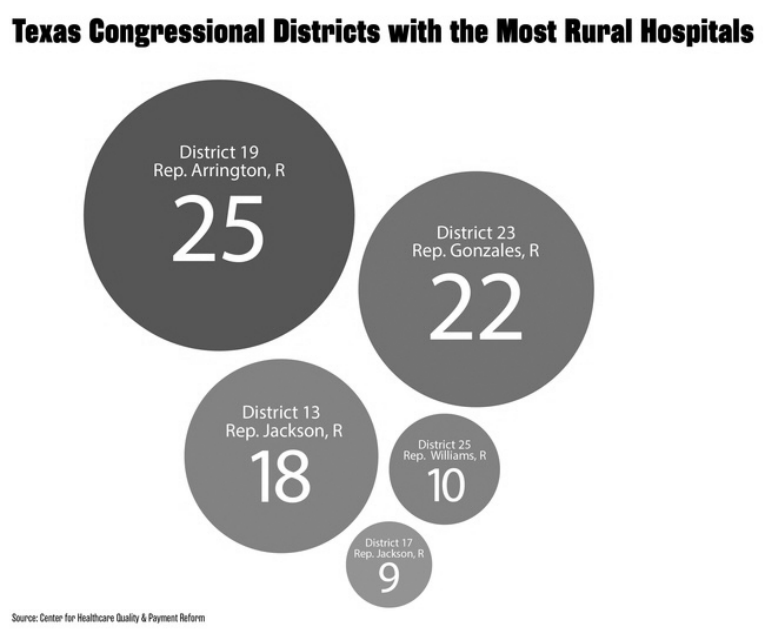
Losses to rural hospitals from changes to Medicaid funding under the new law may be blunted by a $50 billion rural health fund that was added as a last-minute concession to rural members. The National Rural Health Association projected that the major hit Texas rural hospitals would take under the new law would shrink from an estimated loss of $1.2 billion to $407 million after the rural fund is applied over the next five years. But both the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and state governments will have wide latitude on how to use the funding.

That's left rural hospital administrators in Arrington's district uncertain about the future of their facilities — and how the new law will affect them. Dennis Fleenor, the leader of the hospital in Muleshoe in Arrington's district, has concerns. "By the time CMS and the state and everybody else get their fingers in that small slice of pie," Fleenor said, rural hospitals like the one he runs may not get much money from the rural health fund.

Arrington did not respond to the Observer's questions about the healthcare impact residents and hospitals in his district may face under the OBBBA. Arrington has served as the district's representative since 2017 after a career that included working for a private healthcare company, for Texas Tech University, and as an aide for George W. Bush in the Texas Governor's Office and the White House. Arrington has served as chairman of the House Budget Committee, one of the most influential positions in Congress, since 2023. He's also served on the House's Rural and Underserved Communities Health Task Force since 2019.

The 19th Congressional District hugs the New Mexico border on the west and crosses central West Texas past Abilene to the east. Anchored by Lubbock and Abilene, the district is largely rural, featuring 17 million acres of farmland that produce a fifth of the state's total agricultural sales and more cotton than any other district in the country. It's also mostly white and deeply conservative. Around 15% of the district's residents are uninsured, according to 2023 census figures, which is nearly on par with the statewide rate — the highest in the nation. Many residents in Arrington's district rely on public healthcare: 131,000 or 18% of the district population are enrolled in Medicaid. Statewide, 16% of residents are enrolled.

Ten percent of the district's population is enrolled through the ACA marketplace, lower than the state's 15% rate, according to a study by the health research and policy organization KFF. The tax-and-spending bill doesn't extend ACA tax credits that expire at the end of the year and thus will cause insurance premiums to surge for the vast majority of current



Texas Observer graphic

Congressional District 23 — which includes the Big Bend — has the second largest number of rural hospitals in the state.

enrollees. KFF estimates the removal of the tax credits and added hurdles to enroll in the ACA could cause 1.7 million Texans to lose ACA coverage.

Because Texas never expanded Medicaid under the ACA, the state will not have to impose work requirements on Texas' Medicaid patients or reduce its provider tax rate, which will be a requirement under the new law starting in 2027. However, the OBBBA did freeze the provider tax rates states use to finance Medicaid on July 4, making it more difficult for states to increase their own funding for the program.

Dr. Adrian Billings, a longtime West Texas community physician and associate dean of the Rural and Community Engagement Division at Lubbock's Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, said that hospitals are required by law to provide emergency care to patients regardless of whether they can pay. But unlike urban hospitals that serve a higher volume of patients and can better afford to offset the costs of treating uninsured patients, increases in uninsured rates can quickly dig rural hospitals into bigger financial holes.

"It is harder for a rural hospital to absorb when somebody without insurance shows up in the emergency room or needs to be hospitalized," Billings said. "There's just not much fluff at all left in a rural hospital's margins to suffer any significant hit to their collection."

The Mitchell County Hospital District serves the county of nearly 9,000 in the southern area of Arrington's district, situated between Big Spring and Sweetwater. CEO Michelle Gafford told the Observer that the county hospital projected to lose about $700,000 in Medicaid funding, or roughly 3% of its 2026 fiscal year budget. "The cuts are going to hurt everybody, but they are not as crucial as they once would have been," Gafford said, since the hospital's share of Medicaid patients has steadily transferred to privately run managed care organizations. In the 13 years Gafford has worked at the hospital, it's made a profit in only one year. The hospital is designated as a critical-access hospital, which allows it to receive Medicare reimbursements at roughly the same amount of the cost of services. However, other insurers, particularly Medicare Advantage and other private insurers, routinely underpay or deny coverage for services, leaving rural hospitals like the Mitchell County Hospital District persistently in a financial hole.

More recent data gathered and analyzed by the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform shows that 11 rural hospitals in Arrington's district now have had a negative total margin in the most recent three consecutive years with available data — representing over half of the 19 total such hospitals in the state. According to that data, three hospitals in the district have 20% or more of the hospital's patient costs associated with Medicaid services. That includes the Muleshoe Area Medical Center.

Since the 1980s, the Muleshoe-area hospital, located in the sparse western Panhandle near the New Mexico border, has gone through its ups and downs as its owners changed from one group to another. According to the hospital's website, after one national company bankrupted the hospital in 1987, a Muleshoe physician named Bruce Purdy kept it running by seeing patients, cleaning its bathrooms, repairing the facilities, and even sleeping in his clinic to attend to late-night emergencies. Dennis Fleenor, a Lubbock transplant, now runs the critical-access hospital on a shoestring budget. "It's a struggle everyday. But we're here to take care of our community, and we will take care of our community whatever challenges we face," he told the Observer. But he said that Congress can go a long way to help rural hospitals by making insurers fully reimburse hospitals for patient service costs. Even though the hospital reported an average of 20% of the hospital's patient service costs over the last two years were related to services for Medicaid patients, Medicaid paid the hospital for only 18% of those costs.

Between 2005 and 2025, 25 rural hospitals in Texas have closed, the most of any state, according to the center's analysis. In CD-19, two rural hospitals closed during that time and at least six of the district's 30 counties in the district already lack hospitals. In Jones County, north of Abilene, there once were three hospitals. In 2018, Stamford Memorial Hospital closed because it didn't have enough in-patients. The following year, nearby Hamlin Memorial Hospital closed, leaving only its medical clinic and emergency medical services open. By 2023, Anson General Hospital was hanging by a thread with $1.9 million in outstanding debt. At that point, its board decided to convert the facility to a "rural emergency hospital." That federal designation was established under a 2021 law that Arrington helped spearhead as a last resort for rural hospitals; in order to qualify for federal grants, those facilities must eliminate in-patient services. Texas now has five Rural Emergency Hospitals statewide; two, Anson General Hospital and Crosbyton Clinic Hospital, are in Arrington's district.

Vance Boyd, an Anson-based cattleman, pro bull rider, and general contractor, told the Observer he remembers when Anson General Hospital was "thriving, productive, and employed a lot of people." But he said it's now "a triage center to get you to a bigger market." As a cancer survivor, he travels roughly 24 miles to Abilene to see his doctor. "If you're having a health emergency in a more remote area, you're pretty much on a dice roll whether you're going to make it," Boyd said.

Gaines County, which borders New Mexico, was the epicenter of Texas' recent measles outbreak. Since January, the outbreak led to 762 cases, 99 hospitalizations, and two deaths statewide, according to the Texas Health and Human Services. Eighty-one percent of the cases occurred in counties within Arrington's district. Cash-strapped county hospitals with crumbling infrastructure in the surrounding area lacked the space to test for measles or beds to treat patients, the Texas Tribune reported.

Frustrated with the healthcare system, the "death spiral" of rural hospitals, and "AWOL" politicians, Boyd, a conservative Republican, ran against Arrington unsuccessfully in the 2020 and 2024 GOP primaries. His campaign centered, in part, around the need to expand Medicaid in Texas.

"When you live in an area where the average income is low and many are on some sort of government assistance, to expect everybody to have a premium healthcare plan is not realistic," Boyd said. "I feel like our representative didn't fight for us."

Arrington, meanwhile, has his sights set on even further cuts to Medicaid. In mid-July, less than two weeks after he helped pass the OBBBA, Arrington told Bloomberg News that he would be seeking to pass deeper cuts to Medicaid, along with Medicare cuts that he had tried and failed to get locked into the Big Beautiful Bill. Among Arrington's goals for a budget bill sequel this fall are to cut the federal reimbursement rate to penalize states that expanded Medicaid coverage under the ACA and reduce Medicare reimbursements to hospitals by paying the same rate regardless of the provider.

"I think we will do one before the end of the year," Arrington told Bloomberg News. "It's going to be a more targeted set of reforms."

This story was originally published on August 27 in the Texas Observer at texasobserver.org.

NOTICE OF SEALED BID FOR SALE OF REAL PROPERTY

The City of Presidio, Texas (the "City") is accepting sealed bids for the purchase of the following tract of real property (the "Property"), for commercial development as further described in this Notice of Bid Opening, including the City's special desired considerations:

800 Block of O'Reilly Tract:

Property located at 800 West O'Reilly Street being vacant land consisting of 3.21 acres, more or less, being all of lots 11 and 12, Block 2, Russell Addition; and Tracts 4 and 15, Out Block No. 7, City of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas.

On behalf of the City the property was appraised by Ms. Janna Stubbs, P.O. Box 2091, Alpine, Texas 79831. On November 7, 2023, Ms. Stubbs issued an appraisal wherein she found that the market value of the "land only" is $460,000.00. A copy of the full appraisal is available at the Presidio City Hall. For the purposes of this Notice the appraised value meets the statutory requirements of "Fair Market Value" as set forth in the Texas Local Government Code.

The sale of the Property shall be awarded, at the discretion of the City Council, to the bidder submitting a bid in accordance with the terms outlined below and providing the best value to the City.

It is the intention of the City to sell the Property based on the best value bid that is submitted. If, in the judgment of the City Council, the bids submitted do not represent the fair market value of the Property, the Council reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Should any bid be accepted, within two weeks of an award to a Buyer, the Buyer and the City shall execute a purchase and sale agreement and select a mutually agreed upon title company. Upon execution of the purchase and sale agreement and selection of the title company, Buyer shall deposit $5,000 of earnest money in escrow with the title company within three (3) days of execution of the purchase and sale agreement.

Part of the consideration of "Best Value Bid" will include a description of the intended use of the property along with a timeline for the planned development. In making any award, the City will weigh the bid price along with development plans. Greater weight will be given to any Bidder who is willing to enter into a Development Agreement with the City of Presidio covering the development of the property, including a performance agreement with employment metrics.

Provisions of the sale of the Property shall include:

1. For the purchase of the real property in "as is" condition;

2. For the conveyance of the Property by special warranty deed;

3. For the Buyer to pay all fees, and costs associated with closing the sale of

the Property;

4. For the Buyer to assume all responsibility or liability for any environmental condition

affecting the Property, or any clean-up or remediation that may be required by law;

5. For the development of the Property for commercial, job producing development, or other project acceptable to the City;

6. Execute, if applicable, a Development Agreement with the City;

7. Execute Contract for Sale and Purchase of Real Property.

The Property will be sold "as is" with no warranties or representations as to suitability for any particular use. Conveyance of the Property will be by special warranty deed. By submitting a bid, each bidder agrees to waive and does hereby waive any claim the bidder has or may have against the City of Presidio, Texas, and the City's respective employees and representatives for the award of damages or attorney fees, arising out of or in connection with the administration, evaluation, or recommendation of any bid, waiver, deletion or amendment of any requirements under this Notice of Bid Opening, acceptance or rejection of any bids, and award of the bid.

By submitting a bid, the bidder specifically waives any right to recover or be paid attorney fees from the City of Presidio, Texas, or any of the City's employees and representatives under any of the provisions of the Texas Uniform Declaratory Judgments Act (Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code, Section 37.001, et. seq., as amended). The bidder acknowledges and agrees that this is the intentional relinquishment of a presently existing known right and that there is no disparity of bargaining power between the bidder and the City of Presidio, Texas.

By execution and submission of this bid, the bidder hereby represents and warrants to the City that the bidder has read and understands this Notice of Bid Opening and that the bid is made in accordance with the terms stated herein. Bidder acknowledges that it understands all terms herein, which include the waiver provisions, and that it had the right to consult with counsel regarding all applicable documents.

The City reserves the right to waive, delete or amend any of the requirements connected with this bid.

Bids shall be delivered in writing on the attached bid proposal form, signed by the bidder or an authorized representative, and enclosed in a sealed envelope to the City of Presidio, City Administrator, 507 W. O'Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845, or can be delivered in person to City Hall, 507 W. O'Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845. All bids shall be plainly marked "SEALED BID TO PURCHASE REAL PROPERTY." Bids must be received before 2:59 p.m. on October 10th, 2025, and any bid received after that time will not be considered.

City staff will publicly open, read and tabulate the bids at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, October 10th, 2025, at City Hall, City of Presidio, 507 W. O'Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845. Those bids will then be considered at the October 22nd, 2025, meeting of the City of Presidio City Council.

Bidders may contact the City of Presidio at 432-229-2200 for clarifications and questions.

OPINION

Democrats' Labor Day celebration

From the Big Bend Democrats

FORT DAVIS — Big Bend Democrats, 50 strong, celebrated Labor Day with a protest in support of American Laborers.

Labor and labor unions have built, grown and made America strong with a once prosperous middle class for most of the last century. Many handmade signs at the protest Monday spoke to this message, and music from many eras of protest in the U.S.A. kept the two-hour gathering lively.

People from Marfa, Presidio, Alpine and Marathon came out and let their voices be heard. Women would not have the vote if it were not for protests. The war in Vietnam would never have ended. Voting rights for all would not have been protected without the nonviolent Civil Rights protests.

Though Democrats are not in power in Jeff Davis County today, they did receive 38% of the vote in 2024. In the 142 years that there have been recorded votes in Jeff Davis County, Republicans have cast the majority of votes for 59 years, while Democrats did for 68 years, according to the Handbook of Texas.

The survival of our democratic republic depends on the resistance of many good and patriotic protestors to prevent tyranny and authoritarian oligarchic rule. We need the rule of law, respect for the Constitution, checks and balances between the three branches of government, and the freedom to assemble, speak, read and hear factual, truthful media. Also vital are public education, a free press and elections — without which the U.S. as we know it will not survive.

Many future protests are planned to carry on this patriotic American tradition until the ongoing destruction by this regime of our sacred institutions, due process and our personal safety ends.



Photos courtesy of Roy Morey

Big Bend Democrats let their signs do the talking at a Labor Day protest Monday.

OBITUARIES



WILSON

Charlotte Elise Wilson (née Mueller) of Alpine, Texas, died on Saturday, August 23, 2025, in El Paso, Texas.

She was born in El Paso on February 12, 1968, attended school in El Paso and graduated from Andress High School. She continued her education at Sul Ross State University, graduating with a bachelor's and a master's degree in education. Charlotte went on to teach elementary school for 30 years in El Paso, Marfa and Alpine.

She is survived by her husband of 32 years, William C. "Chuck" Wilson; daughters Leigh Christine and Nicole Elise; as well as her parents, Beverley and Paul Mueller; brother Paul; mother-in-law Karron Wilson; sister-in-law Tiffany; nephew Trip; her brother- and sister-in-law Troy and Erica Wilson; niece Cooper and nephew Cade Wilson; sister-in-law Kari Vasquez; and numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.

After retiring, she enjoyed working on her home in Alpine and serving as clerk of session for the First Presbyterian Church, along with spending time with her beloved friends in Alpine gardening, painting, flower arranging for Double K flowers, working with wood, and being active in EP Retired Teachers Assoc.

Charlotte loved life, loved being a mother and wife, and she loved being a daughter and sister.

She will also be missed by her community and many close friends in Alpine, her childhood friends in El Paso, and everyone who interacted with her.

A service for Charlotte will be held at the First Presbyterian Church in Alpine at 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 13, 2025.

In lieu of flowers, a contribution to the Scottish Rite Children's Hospital in Dallas, the Ronald McDonald House, or a charity of your choice in Charlotte's name would be appreciated.

Charlotte adored the yellow poppies on the Franklin Mountains. If you wish, we ask you to plant similar golden poppies in her memory in late October. She would love that this might remind you of her during their next bloom.

Jeff Davis County Food Pantry launches $60K match challenge

From The Jeff Davis County Food Pantry

FORT DAVIS — September is Hunger Action Month, and the Food Pantry of Jeff Davis County is calling on neighbors to step up. Thanks to generous donors, every gift this month will be matched — dollar for dollar — up to $30,000, unlocking a total of $60,000 to fight hunger right here at home.

"We receive 100% of our funding from private foundations and individual donations. We receive no county, state, or federal funds. We've been doing this for 26 years, and we are truly 'neighbors feeding neighbors,'" said Executive Director Vicki Gibson.

With the help of its Ford van, the pantry delivers fresh produce and groceries to more than 240 families in Fort Davis, Valentine, and the Davis Mountains Resort. It also supplies healthy snacks to every student in Fort Davis and Valentine schools, and provides school lunches to over 120 children whose families are pantry clients.

All school-age children are also welcome at the Kids Pantry inside the county library, where they can enjoy breakfast, lunch, or dinner — no forms or sign-ups required. With Jeff Davis County leading the state in the percentage of school-age children living below the poverty line, children's programs are a major part of the pantry's budget.

How to help: Donations can be made online at foodpantry-jdc.org, by mail to P.O. Box 244, or in person at the pantry. Every gift in September counts twice toward feeding local families.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thur Sept 4

Calamity Creek
7 - 9pm at The Ritchey
Calamity Creek is playing live at The Ritchey on Thursday at 7pm.

Paint & Sip - Couples Edition
6pm at Alcove Social
Unleash your inner artist! Join us for a fun paint and sip night. No experience necessary.

Hike with Homeless Dogs
9 - 10am at Davis Mountains State Park
Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail!

Fri Sept 5

Rob Mazurek Perigelion Gaze & Chicaco Underground Duo
9pm - 12am at Club Nowhere -
401 S. Highland Ave, Marfa
Night viewing of Rob Mazurek's Perihelion Gaze and Listening event for the Chicago Underground Duo new album Hyperglyph at Club Nowhere.

HEATSTROKE
7pm at Mystery Lights Gallery
A group show by Ariana Alexis, Chelsea Quinlan, Jax Le Baron-widmar, and Rigo Alberto Zamarron. Free drinks until none!

Katie Pierson
7 - 9pm at The Ritchey
Katie Pierson is playing live at The Ritchey on Friday at 7pm.

Library Fundraiser
11am - 3pm at Spicewood Restaurant
EAT great food to help raise money for a GREAT organization! 50% of proceeds from the lunch and dinner special benefit Alpine Public Library!

Sat Sept 6

Los Yonke Gallos VS Town Lake Nightcrawlers from ATX
4pm at Vizcaino Field
Come hang and enjoy some sandlot béisbol! Follow @losyonkegallsdemarfa & @them.nightcrawlers

Archery in the Mountains
10am - 3pm at Davis Mountains State Park
Come practice your bow and arrow skills at this drop-in program open to all ability levels.

Girls Night Out
8pm - 10pm at The Granada Theatre
The Granada hosts Girls Night Out Saturday, September 6th.

38th ANNUAL MARFA LIGHTS FESTIVAL
August 30, 2025
marfachamberofcommerce.org/marfa-lights-festival

Sun Sept 7

Far West Texas Jammers
9pm at Railroad Blues
Come see the Far West Texas Jammers Saturday, September 6th, from 9-12 and catch a fire DJ set by the Joker himself, Armando, from 12-2am as he makes his triumphant return to the Railroad Blues.

Looking to submit an event?
Scan our QR code here:

Ongoing Weekly Events & Classes

Xbox Monday
Mondays (all day) at Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes
Tuesday & Thursday at 6pm at Marfa Public Library

AA (online & sometimes in-person)
Saturday at 12pm at https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2 & sometimes in-person at Marfa Public Library

AA (in-person)
Monday & Wednesday at 6pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Alpine Farmers Market
Saturday at 9am - 12pm at Alpine Visitor Center

Note: Schedules are subject to change. Please call or visit business websites to confirm the event is happening.

Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District
Notice of Budget Hearing on September 11, 2025, and Taxpayer Impact Statement

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District is in the process of preparing an annual budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025 and ending September 30, 2026. Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on said budget and a proposed *ad valorem* tax rate of $0.01 on each One Hundred Dollars ($100.00) of assessed value of taxable property will be held on September 11, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Jury Room on the second floor of the Presidio County Courthouse, 300. N. Highland Ave., Marfa, Texas 79843.

Brenda Witty
Chair / Board of Directors

TAXPAYER IMPACT STATEMENT

House Bill 1522, passed by the Texas Legislature in 2025, amends section 551.043 of the Texas Government Code to require that the notice of a meeting required to be posted under section 551.043(a) of the Texas Open Meetings Act, at which a governmental body will discuss or adopt a budget for the governmental body, must include a taxpayer impact statement showing, for the median-valued homestead property, a comparison of the property tax bill in dollars pertaining to the property for the current fiscal year to an estimate of the property tax bill in dollars for the same property for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District (PCUWCD) has proposed a budget for the District's 2025-2026 fiscal year. The District intends to adopt its budget on or before September 30, 2025.

- **Value of Median-Valued Homestead Property in the County:** $96,312
- **Property Tax Bill for the Current Fiscal Year ($0.01000):** $963.12
- **Estimated Property Tax Bill for the Upcoming Fiscal Year if the City Adopts the Proposed Budget and Tax Rate ($0.01000):** $963.12

The estimates in this Impact Statement are valid only for the proposed budget and proposed tax rate that the PCUWCD Board of Directors will discuss at its meeting on **September 11, 2025**. The proposed budget and the proposed tax rate may each be amended by the PCUWCD Board of Directors at any time before their final adoption. If the PCUWCD Board of Directors intends to discuss the proposed budget at a subsequent meeting, the District will include a Taxpayer Impact Statement in the notice for that meeting which will include updated estimates based on any amendments to the proposed budget and proposed tax rate.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Taxpayer Impact Statement was included in the public notice for the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District meeting to be held on **September 11, 2025**.

Trey Gerfers — August 28, 2025

Name: C. Arthur "Trey" Gerfers, III — Date

Title: PCUWCD General Manager

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Clearer reports, stronger follow-up: What's next for breast cancer screenings

From the Big Bend Regional Hospital District

PRESIDIO — When the Big Bend Regional Hospital District (BBRHD) brought mobile mammography services back to the region this May, nearly 200 women in Presidio, Alpine, and Terlingua received screenings — many for the first time in years.

But in the days following the event, community members and providers raised concerns about report delivery and the number of test results labeled "BI-RADS Category 0," which indicates that more imaging is needed to complete a diagnosis. In response, BBRHD launched a formal investigation to clarify the facts, improve transparency and maintain public trust in this essential service.

Clarifying what happened

According to Assured Imaging, all 193 patients received a mailed letter explaining their personal results. Of the 124 patients who listed a primary care provider, 103 reports were successfully faxed between May 15 and May 25. The remaining 21 were mailed directly to the providers' offices within 24 hours of a failed fax attempt. However, 69 women did not list a provider and received their own exam report. BBRHD has acknowledged that even with these protocols, some local providers did not receive the reports as expected, and that further coordination is needed. "We're reviewing every part of the process—from report delivery to follow-up coordination — to ensure future screenings run even more smoothly," said Lynette Brehm, executive director of BBRHD. "Our commitment is to provide high-quality care with transparency and accountability."

What does BI-RADS 0 mean?

Assured Imaging confirmed that 23.8% of patients in the May event received a BI-RADS Category 0 result. While this is higher than typical for population-wide averages, it is not unexpected in groups that include many first-time screenings, pre-menopausal women, or patients with no prior mammograms available for comparison. A BI-RADS 0 result does not indicate cancer. It simply means the radiologist cannot determine the cancer risk with the current image, and additional imaging — such as an ultrasound or diagnostic mammogram — is needed to complete the assessment. Patients are encouraged to follow up with their primary care provider or contact BBRHD for assistance.

"We understand how unsettling it can be to receive an inconclusive result," Brehm added. "We want every woman to feel informed, supported and confident in her next steps." To support follow-up care, Assured Imaging has mailed exam image discs to all BI- RADS 0 patients. For questions or replacement copies, contact mobile.medical- records@rezolutai.com or call 1-888-204-9214 (Option 3).

Why it matters

Breast cancer remains one of the leading causes of death among women, but early detection can dramatically increase survival. According to the American Cancer Society, the five-year survival rate is 99% when breast cancer is found early and remains localized. In rural areas like Presidio and Brewster counties, where the closest fixed mammography facilities may be hours away, mobile screening is not just convenient — it's critical. BBRHD is continuing its discussions with Assured Imaging and evaluating improvements to communication workflows, report delivery protocols, and patient education in preparation for future mobile events. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Brehm at lynette@bbrhd.com.

Marfa ISD Sports Report

By Roxye Lara

Lady Horns serve up a sweep against Presidio

The Marfa Lady Horns delivered a strong performance Friday night, defeating the JV Presidio Blue Devils in three straight sets.

Marfa opened the match with intensity, dominating the first set 25–15. Presidio pushed back in the second set, but the Lady Horns held their ground to edge out a 25–22 win, even though they initially fell behind by 6 points. With momentum firmly on their side after their second set comeback, Marfa closed out the third set with confidence to secure the sweep.

Senior leaders Ava Flores and Raven Martinez set the tone at the net, using their athleticism to hammer down kills and keep Presidio on the defensive. Giselle Torres and Zoey Salgado anchored the back row with timely digs, while Dariela Muñoz tallied 4 assists and Madison Cash added 2 service aces to round out the effort.

On the JV side, Presidio earned the win, but the young Lady Horns showed a lot of fight and determination throughout their match. The young squad — mainly freshmen and sophomores — used Adonise Lujan's efforts as she contributed several digs and aces, while Daniela Fernandez and Ora Webb hustled defensively and combined for 4 assists to keep Marfa competitive.

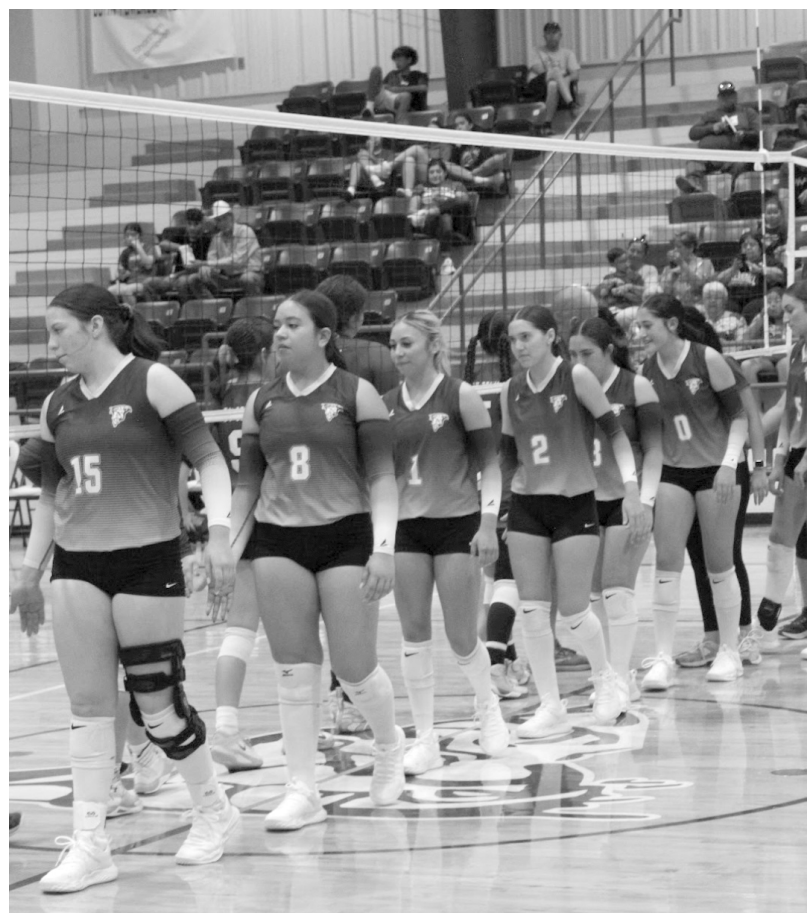


Photo by Marfa ISD high school yearbook students

Lady Horns show sportsmanship with a "good game" to the Presidio Devils after last Friday's sweep.

match against McCamey and Van Horn. Despite a strong effort, they fell to McCamey in a close five-set battle.

Against Van Horn, the Lady Horns came out strong with a 25–20 win in the first set. Senior Ava Flores led with an ace and three kills, senior Raven Martinez added two kills and an assist, and junior Giselle Torres stepped up as libero, recording three solid digs.

Though Marfa dropped the next three sets (10–25, 10–25, 18–25), there were plenty of positives. In the second set, juniors Dariela Muñoz delivered a solid block, and Zoey Salgado came in clutch with a dig off the net. The third set saw some miscommunication, but freshman Adeline Marquez made her presence known with a dig and two big blocks. In the final set, the Lady Horns found their rhythm again, with Martinez adding two kills and Muñoz one more, fighting hard before falling 18–25.

Head Coach Osiris Alferez had a lot to say about her team: "I've been really proud of how this group is evolving as a team. What stands out to me is the confidence they're showing on the court. There's no hesitation anymore, and every player is stepping up with trust in each other. From a coaching perspective, that trust has changed our game. We're no longer relying on just one or two players to score; instead, the offense is being spread out across the team. That balance not only makes us harder to defend, but it also shows how much the girls are buying into the idea of playing for each other. It's been exciting to see their growth, and I think it's only the beginning of what they're capable of this season. Honestly, I'd say every single player has exceeded my expectations this year. When I came in, I completely switched up their positions, and instead of resisting, they've all been incredibly coachable. That's made the transition smooth and really rewarding to watch. I have a new setter this year so we could run a 6–2, and Dariela has been amazing in embracing that role. Ava, Zoey, and Amaya have stepped into hitting and you can tell they're enjoying it. Raven and Itzel have adjusted really well on the outside, handling different sets and tempos. Our littles, Madison and Giselle, have been huge in making plays and contributing steady defense in the back row. And then there's our freshman middle, Adeline, who has shown so much growth game by game. I'm really excited to see how she continues to mature in the game and what the future holds for her. Truly, it's been a full team effort, and that's what makes this group so fun to coach."

This Saturday, the Lady Horns will hit the road to Crane for a much-anticipated matchup against former Marfa coach Priscila Serrano and the Lady Golden Cranes. JV is set to begin at 5 p.m., with varsity to follow at 6 p.m.



Photo by Marfa ISD high school yearbook students

Under the Friday night lights, QB Austin McGary lifts his helmet — eye black smeared, focus locked in.

Shorthorns fall to Da Vinci Dragons in home opener

The Shorthorns opened their 2025 football season under the Friday night lights at Martin Field, surrounded by the energy of the hometown crowd, the community festivities and the start of the UIL football season in Texas.

The game began with the Horns receiving the opening kickoff with senior return man Alejandro Rodriguez giving the Horns early momentum with a 28-yard kick return to midfield. However, the offense struggled to maintain possession, with multiple fumbles, penalties and dropped passes stalling drives throughout the game. Da Vinci capitalized on Marfa's miscues, breaking loose for long scoring plays of 60 and 50 yards that proved costly. Defensive breakdowns allowed the Dragons to seize momentum and hand Marfa its first loss of the season.

Despite the loss, several Horns turned in strong performances. JoSaul Baeza recorded key stops against the Dragons' backs and receivers, while Ayden Alvarez and Asael Zubia made numerous solo tackles before exiting with injuries. Offensively, sophomore quarterback Austin McGary led the offense by spreading carries between Darren Campos, Alvarez, Abelardo Marquez and Rodriguez.

Marfa's scoring highlights included a 40-yard touchdown reception by Abelardo Marquez, a 3-yard touchdown run by Rodriguez, McGary's 30-yard TD run, and Ayven Pippen and Ayden Alvarez with a 2-point conversion each.

The Horns also had bright moments defensively, with Rodriguez recovering a fumble and contributing multiple solo tackles. Marfa's defense even pinned Da Vinci deep on a 4th-and-30, but a dropped ball by a Da Vinci back turned into a broken play that resulted in a long touchdown run for the Dragons. Da Vinci later added a pick-six with just 50 seconds left in the first half to widen the gap. At halftime, the Shorthorns trailed 16–30, but the deficit grew as Da Vinci continued to capitalize on turnovers in the second half which led to the final score of 48-22 and a loss for the Horns.

After the game, Head Coach Kevin Pippen acknowledged the disappointing result but remained optimistic: "This wasn't the outcome we wanted, but I'm proud of our younger players who stepped up when called upon. We didn't have our best team performance, but there were positive takeaways that we can build on moving forward."

The Horns host Fort Hancock on Friday at Martin Field, JH 5 p.m. and Varsity 7:30 p.m.

Lady Horns battle hard despite dual match defeats

The Marfa Lady Horns traveled to Van Horn Tuesday night for a dual

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Classifieds & public notices



Rolling down Main

Photo by Rowdy Dugan

Rachel Tate spreads joy and lollipops while clown Erin Schneider plays her accordion as they both ride in the Marfa Live Arts Circus Clown float during the Marfa Lights Festival parade Saturday.

'Bright Tomorrows Out of Dark Yesterdays' art exhibition opening

Curtis Bordenave's charcoal drawings explore aesthetics of liberation

From Mesa Pictures

Mesa Pictures is proud to present *Bright Tomorrows Out of Dark Yesterdays*, a solo exhibition by Creole artist Curtis Bordenave, on view from September 12to November 14, 2025. This striking collection of 40 charcoal drawings on paper explores the aesthetics of liberation, drawing inspiration from the symbolic and emotional depth of Egyptian hieroglyphs and historical narratives of escape.

Each drawing, which the artist calls "BayouGlyphs," is crafted through a process that is linked to memory and repetition. The work in B.T.O.O.Y. presents a singular image of an enslaved person fleeing with a bindle — a dual symbol embodying both the pursuit of emancipation and the stark reality of "wanted" posters. This exhibition creates an expressive space where past and present converge, offering a meditation on freedom, survival, and self-determination.

"As a Creole artist, I recognize my roots and I live to carry my history with me," says Bordenave. "The use of this symbol in my work is a way of processing this dark past but also gives me a chance to honor my ancestors and the people who fought for freedom."

The opening reception is set for September 12 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Mesa Pictures, 310 W San Antonio St. The exhibition is free and open to the public, with gallery hours from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday.



Photo by Curtis Bordenave

About Mesa Pictures

We are a hybrid Kunsthalle-style, for-profit gallery located in Far West Texas. Mesa Pictures operates as a platform for experimental presentation and sustainable enterprise. With a rotating program of exhibitions, screenings, performances, and publications, the gallery showcases a diverse group of contemporary artists, from local to nationally and internationally recognized artists.

Fun Facts with Ayven

By Ayven Pippen, Marfa ISD Journalism Class

Hi my name is Ayven! I really like science and I think that it's really cool that we live in an area with really amazing but often-overlooked scientific facts. So I decided to find some cool facts about the Big Bend to share with the newsletter readers!

The Chinati Mountains outside Marfa are really old and came from volcanoes a long time ago. The eruption was one of the largest in the earth's history and happened over 35 million years ago. The tallest part of the range is called Chinati Peak and it's super high at 7,728 feet above sea level. These mountains are in the desert so it's covered by a lot of cactus and dry plants. People have lived around them for thousands of years and even left rock art. There are also wild sheep called aoudad. In the 1940's and 1950's, Aoudad sheep were first brought into areas of west Texas. They are an invasive species imported from Africa originally for big game hunting, but they got out of hand and now are part of the desert ecosystem, climbing around the cliffs and competing with native species like the mule deer, the big horn sheep, and the pronghorn. You can drive through the Chinatis on a road called Pinto Canyon Road, and at night you might see the strange Marfa Lights above the mountains — and to this day nobody knows where they are from. Well isn't that a lot of fun facts!

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BBT Expanding Across West Texas

BBT is proud to have received $4.89 million in funding through the BOOT (Broadband Opportunity Outreach and Technology) Grant Program. With this support, we are expanding our fiber network to reach over 500 homes in Fort Davis, Limpia Crossing, Iraan, Marathon, and Alpine.

This initiative is part of our ongoing mission to close the digital divide by building reliable, future-ready internet infrastructure in rural West Texas.

Please note: Some areas included in this expansion are pending final agreements related to AEP pole contracts.

We remain committed to transparency and will continue working closely with local partners to complete these projects as efficiently as possible. Stay informed at **bigbend.com**

Marfa Estate Sale

Sat/Sun Sept 6 & 7 from 9am - 3pm
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GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY
Judge Jose Portillo:
(432) 729-4452

CITY OF MARFA
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
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BREWSTER COUNTY

Main Number: 432-837-6200

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Alpine Mayor Catherine Eaves:

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Email: mayor.eaves@ci.alpine.tx.us

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY

Judge Curtis Evans: *(432) 426-3968*

FEDERAL:

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn:

(202) 224-2934 (D.C. office)

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz:

(202) 224-5922 (D.C. office)

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Questions? Call 432-837-8670

The Marfa Parks and Recreation Board meets every third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

THE BIG BEND Sentinel

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