

Sister thwarts Brite Ranch deal

By ROB D'AMICO

Marfa

After nearly eight years of legal battles over the future of the 65,000-acre Brite Ranch in Presidio County, the primary conflict appeared headed to a settlement agreement last month, but the ending hit a snag with the objections of one of the four siblings involved in the conflict—Hester Ann White—despite her minimal involvement in the proceedings over the course of years. Shortly after the failure to settle, she filed her own lawsuit claiming that her brothers, Mac White and the late Beau White, both with no children, had committed fraud by secretly adopting a middle-aged man that would dilute her inheritance.

The legal proceedings—primarily over who could control the historic ranch and whether it could be divided and sold in pieces—were a quagmire of multiple lawsuits with at least 667 filings for the primary suit. Principal parties in the lawsuits are the heirs to their late mother's trust, siblings Jim, Mac, Beau and Hester Ann White. Beau died in June 2025, but he and Mac had both adopted Geoffrey Conner, then 59, in 2022. Jim's three sons—Cuatro White, Clint White and Marti White Wright, intervened in the lawsuit in support of their father, with daughter Raphael White Woodward also being included in lawsuit proceedings.

Before Beau died, he made adopted son Conner the executor of his estate, which wasn't unusual, since he is an attorney. But Conner then inserted himself into the lawsuit, claiming he was the heir of Beau's trust.

When attorneys for Jim, Mac and Conner gathered in the Presidio County courthouse in Marfa on February 24, they intended to seal their deal and modify their trusts involved in the ranch ownership, paving the way for each sibling to sell their parcels as desired, including sister Hester Ann. The exact details of the settlement are not public, but a modification of the trusts motion filed publicly in January outlines that each of the



THE PORTAL TO TEXAS HISTORY

Lucas Brite, who founded the Brite Ranch in 1885, looking over cattle to be sold in 1923.

four siblings would be the sole trustees of a quarter of the ranch and that a previous prohibition against selling the ranch would be rescinded. (The settlement agreement might outline different amounts of ownership.)

Likely the biggest concession by Jim and his son Cuatro was that they would no longer fight the validity of Conner as a trustee, after previously claiming his adoption was a “sham” intended to dilute their side of the family as beneficiaries.

“Sitting on his hands”

Hester Ann's new attorney, Steve Anderson of Alpine, objected to a final ruling on the settlement and trust modifications at the hearing when he told the court that he and his client had not had adequate time to review the filings, that they should have had 45 days instead of about a month given.

Cuatro's attorney, Don Campbell, argued repeatedly that the sister's request was unreasonable, especially since she has been a named party in the suit all along. “Hester Ann has never filed anything contesting anything,” he said, and added that neither had her two children, who would be heirs to her trusts at her death. Campbell said Hester Ann did nothing during a trial for the case, nothing in almost three years after it. She or her attorney would occasionally show up for hearings, but they never filed any motions or argued any positions. “Hester Ann's attorney can't just sit on his hands for three years,” Campbell added.

Anderson reiterated that Hester Ann—and he, as her new attorney—were interested in the final settlement, but more time was needed to digest the 60 or so pages. He also offered an explanation for her not participating in proceedings over the years. “My client tried to stay out of this case,” he said. “She didn't want to sue anyone because they are family.”

Jim's attorney, David Reber, argued that he went to meet Anderson a month prior. “I went to Alpine to meet Anderson and go through the [trust] modifications on January 27,” he said.

District Judge Tryon Lewis said Anderson's objection to finalizing the deal was “relevant” and ultimately agreed to halt the proceedings. Last summer, an appeals court stayed the suit from any final judgment, but the court agreed to open a window of time for Lewis to allow the parties to continue to file motions and hopefully move toward a settlement; that deadline would have been on February 27, three days after the hearing, and with no time to come to an agreement with Hester Ann, the lawsuit and settlement would be shut down. The settlement—the result of at

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Marfa ‘smart’ water meters in the works

“Free up employees
to do things more
important than
meter reading.”

By ROB D'AMICO

Marfa

The city is moving forward with some 1,400 installations of water meters that transmit usage back to a base station automatically, without the need for meter readers. The city had an initial look at smart meters in the spring of 2024 and tested a pilot project last year.

With the new meters, expected to be installed throughout Marfa by early fall, customers will be

able to log in online to view water usage and billing, and city officials hope the meters will install more transparency and confidence on how bills are calculated.

On March 10, the City Council awarded an \$800,000 contract to Premier Waterworks of Lubbock for the installations. A tax increase to pay for bonds will fund the project. Three companies bid on the project, with one other, Core & Main of St. Louis, coming in near the same price, but that bidder scored lower on evaluations by city officials. The cost for the project is the same as projected in 2024.

“It looks like it'll be a very good thing because it will free up

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CBP invites officials for brief on wall

Customs and Border Protection officials will meet with local elected leaders Friday morning for an invitation-only briefing on planned border wall installations.

The meeting will be at 10 a.m. at the Border Patrol station in Presidio. Invitees include Sheriff Danny Dominguez, County Judge Joe Portillo, Presidio Mayor John Ferguson and all Presidio County commissioners and Presidio City

Council members. An online graphic for the meeting notes:

Update on Border Wall and Detection Technology. Chief Patrol Agent Lloyd M. Easterling will be hosting an invitation only discussion on future plans regarding Border Wall construction in the Big Bend Region.

Big Bend Sentinel will cover discussions related by attendees at bigbendsentinel.com.

FISHER SAND & GRAVEL AWARDED \$1.2 BILLION BORDER WALL CONTRACT

Company has a
record of criminal
convictions for
tax fraud, air and
water pollution, and
workplace safety.

By SAM KARAS

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently awarded Fisher Sand & Gravel, a North Dakota firm with an Arizona-based subsidiary, a \$1.2 billion contract to build a “vertical border barrier system” from Ruidosa in northwestern Presidio County to the top of Colorado Canyon in Big Bend Ranch State Park. The project will cost roughly \$17 million a mile and represents the fourth-largest contract for border wall construction in U.S. history—trailing behind three other big-ticket Fisher-led projects in Arizona and around El Paso.

Fisher Sand & Gravel falls under the Fisher Industries umbrella—a vertically-integrated firm taking on projects like bridges, levees and roads from the design phase to the ribbon-cutting. They've become an industry leader in border wall construction, known for taking on flashy projects commanding eye-popping amounts of money in terrain that others might balk at as unbuildable. “Fisher Industries likes the tough jobs—we take the hardest first,” CEO Tommy Fisher said in a promotional video.

Fisher himself attracted a lot of media attention during Trump's first term for being the boots on the ground for We Build the Wall, a nonprofit organization started by far-right activist Brian Kolfage in 2018. Motivated by the belief that the federal government wasn't doing enough to secure the border, We Build the Wall privately crowd-funded sections of border wall in Sunland Park, New Mexico, and Mission, Texas, with a star-studded crew including Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist.

In 2020, Kolfage, Bannon and fellow We Build the Wall advisory board members Andrew Badolato and Timothy Shea were indicted on charges of skimming off the top of their fundraising efforts for personal gain. “The defendants defrauded hundreds of thousands of donors, capitalizing on their interest in funding a border wall to raise millions of dollars, under the false pretense that all of that money would be spent on construction,” U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss wrote in a press release. “While repeatedly assuring donors that Brian Kolfage, the founder and public face of We Build the Wall, would not be paid a cent, the defendants secretly schemed to pass hundreds of thousands of dollars to Kolfage, which he used to fund his lavish lifestyle.” (All four men were eventually found guilty; Bannon was pardoned by Trump at the tail end of his term.)

Hot water over treaty violation

While Fisher was not explicitly implicated in these criminal charges, the firm was in legal hot water all their own. In December 2019, the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) filed suit against a number of plaintiffs including We Build the Wall and Fisher Sand & Gravel for what the agency alleged was shoddy wall design in Hidalgo County in the Rio Grande Valley.

Even in an era of unprecedented drought, the Rio Grande is still wild and temperamental, living up to the various translations of its name as “Big River” or “Brave River.” Both the American and Mexican governments have spent the better part of the past two centuries litigating exactly where the line between the two countries stands and how much of its water each country is allowed to use, a hot-button issue that has erupted in violence in recent years.

The IBWC's suit alleged that Fisher's wall design violated a 1944 treaty between the United States and Mexico regulating the flow of the Rio Grande—and specifically a 1970 update to that agreement setting the international boundary as “the middle of the channel occupied during normal river flows” and “prohibit[ing] any works in the United States that will ... cause deflection or obstruction of the normal flow of the Rio Grande.”

In plainer words, IBWC didn't buy for a second that Fisher's novel pitch—a border wall designed to let floodwater pass through—would actually work and alleged that plans submitted to the agency for review “contained very little substance.”

In their answer to the IBWC's complaint, Fisher roundly denied that the company's actions violated international treaties and explained that the federal government had waived environmental regulations to expedite the construction of border barriers in Hidalgo County.

Judge Randy Crane dismissed the case in 2022 and a settlement was reached behind the scenes requiring “quarterly inspections, maintain[ing] an existing gate that allows for the release of floodwaters and keep a \$3 million bond ... for 15 years, to cover any expenses in case the structure fails,” per the Texas Tribune.

The IBWC suit was not Fisher Industries' first or last rodeo with

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MARGRET GREBOWICZ

A border wall in New Mexico

traverses hilly landscape. Fisher Sand & Gravel was contracted for New Mexico wall construction.

INSIDE

House full of cartoon murals



Art, page 8

Sentinel News Project





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Former council member appointed to commissioner seat

Presidio
County Judge Joe Portillo appointed a new commissioner at last Wednesday’s court meeting to replace the resigning Precinct 3 commissioner, Franky Ortiz.
Obed Escontrias, who runs a freight company in Presidio, will take the seat, which has about two years and nine months remaining in the term. Precinct 3 covers a good portion of the city of Presidio and west past Candelaria.
Escontrias, who also graduated from Presidio High School

served on the Presidio City Council in the mid-teens as mayor pro tem and then as mayor for six months to fill a vacancy. He said he plans to focus on the basics—roads and “keeping the money flowing in” with hopes of new revenue.
Under Texas law, the judge may appoint someone directly. The appointed commissioner can then file an application for the November general election ballot, and other candidates can file as well to fill out the unexpired term.



Obed Escontrias



‘Shorthorn Substation’

AEP hosted an open house Tuesday to let the public look at additional details on its proposed “Shorthorn Substation” on Aparejo Street in Marfa. The come-and-go event was held to discuss the need for a Special Use Permit, which will allow the company to rezone a lot as industrial to build the substation. The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the rezoning Tuesday night after Big Bend Sentinel deadline. See bigbendsentinel.com for more details.

Brite ranch legal wrangling continues

Continued from page 1
least four mediation sessions over the years and numerous negotiations—appeared dead in the water.
Attorneys for Jim, Mac and Conner told Judge Lewis it might be possible to go back to the 8th Court of Appeals in El Paso to ask for a deadline extension for new hearings, which they did. The appeals court, on March 5, granted a 30-day extension.
While Hester Ann’s lawsuit slammed the brakes on the final judgement on a settlement and trust modifications, it’s unclear if it will continue to impede progress with the extension.
Her lawsuit claims that the “secret” adoption of Conner was a “fraud” and part of a “conspiracy,” and that Mac and Beau breached

their duties as trustees to do nothing to the detriment of her own trust. Hester Ann’s lawsuit asks for Conner to be removed as Beau’s trustee—something that might need to be addressed before a new settlement could be sought.
Complicating matters is that there is a separate partition lawsuit that would force the parties to divide the land and allow for sale that might be different than the settlement agreement. That lawsuit is on track with a different judge and a schedule of orders for finalizing surveys and appraisals of the ranch, along with deadlines for parties to buy out other heirs.
The only thing for certain moving forward is that the warring siblings, seemingly on a path to resolution, are again tangled in a

labyrinth of legal questions needing to be resolved.
The parties involved in the lawsuit and their attorney have consistently noted they would not comment on the case.
The Brite Ranch, abutting Capote Peak, was founded by Lucas Brite, who built a Hereford cattle empire on the land in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The ranch was also the site of the Brite Store raid in 1917, in which Mexican bandits raided the headquarters and killed three people, and the following massacre of 15 Mexican and Mexican American young men in the village of Porvenir, Texas, has been alleged by many as payback for the raid. For more about the ranch and extensive lawsuit coverage, see bigbendsentinel.com/brite-lawsuit.

Officials hope meters will offer transparency

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employees in the water department to do things more important than meter reading,” Councilmember Mark Morrison said. He added that there are frequent alerts if a meter stops transmitting, and the actual meter stores data so that it can update the base station when up and running again.
“I’m glad to see the project moving forward,” said Councilmember Travis Acreman. “I know that it’s going to bring a lot of benefits to our utility customers, both in terms of their access to and

transparency of information and security of knowing how water is being used, if there’s a leak, and just making sure that issues can be resolved as quickly as possible.”
Councilmember Raul Lara said the meters are needed to address customer complaints about unusually high bills and not trusting the way their meters have been read. However, Lara, who cast a vote against the tax increase in October, said his main objection was including two high-price projects in the same budget year. “It’s coming. I just hate that we did two projects in one,” he said. “We should have

done one in each budget.”
The city has installed more than 125 smart meters already with Premier Waterworks in an effort to make progress on replacing old meters, although the online portal will not be available until the bulk of meters is in place.
The meters will transmit information back to a base via radio frequencies. Premier Waterworks first will acquire FCC permission for the frequency, which then will be programmed for each meter. That process should take a few weeks, then installations will begin.

Wall builders have history of fines, lawsuits

Continued from page 1
the court system. Federal court records show the company’s involvement in over four dozen lawsuits. A search for the company’s name on Good Jobs First, a database tracking white collar crime, yielded 25 results, ranging from a \$1.16 million fine levied by the Department of Justice in 2009 for tax fraud to a \$5,700 fine for a workplace safety violation issued in 2024.
Back in 2020, the *Associated Press* reported on Fisher as a rising star within the border wall industry who had personally lobbied President Trump via a spot on *Fox & Friends* with a promise that his company utilized technology “so revolutionary, it’s like comparing the iPhone to a payphone.” The AP interviewed a number of other influential North Dakotans who admired the outspoken builder for his business acumen.
In a strange twist of fate, Fisher

Sand & Gravel is currently suing DHS for breach of contract on a section of border wall the company erected in Custom and Border Protection’s El Paso sector, alleging that the federal government has not yet paid the company for more than \$6.3 million of services already rendered. (At press time, DHS had not yet filed a response to Fisher’s complaint with the court, but Judge Philip S. Hadji had signed off on a motion to stay, freezing proceedings until May.)
Fisher’s brand-new contract to build in Presidio County and Big Bend Ranch State Park—issued the same day embattled former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was booted from office—has raised eyebrows among environmentalists.
Laiken Jordahl of the Center for Biological Diversity, who has extensively documented border wall construction since the first

Trump administration, declined to comment on Fisher Sand & Gravel’s work specifically, but said that he worried about any kind of large-scale construction project in the Big Bend. “In Arizona, we’ve watched in horror as contractors dynamited cultural sites, carved through cliff faces and paved over wildlife habitat to build the border wall,” he told the *Sentinel*. “In Big Bend, now that every environmental protection has been waived, there’s no limit to the malicious destruction they will inflict. They’ll profit from destroying our natural heritage. And we’ll be left with a cold steel wall between us and the Rio Grande.”
Fisher Industries did not return multiple requests for comment on this story, nor did attorneys representing the firm in its current suit against DHS.

PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL

Fisher Sand & Gravel obtiene contrato para la construcción de un muro

Empresa con un largo historial de fraude y violaciones ambientales y de seguridad construirá en un parque estatal

Por Sam Karas

El jueves pasado, el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS por sus siglas en inglés) otorgó a Fisher Sand & Gravel, una empresa de Dakota del Norte con una filial en Arizona, un contrato de 1.200 millones de dólares para construir un sistema de barrera fronteriza vertical desde Ruidosa, en el noroeste del condado de Presidio, hasta la cima del Cañón Colorado en el Parque Estatal Big Bend Ranch. El proyecto costará aproximadamente 17 millones de dólares por milla y representa el cuarto contrato más grande para la construcción de un muro fronterizo en la historia de Estados Unidos, solo superado por otros tres grandes proyectos liderados por Fisher en Arizona y los alrededores de El Paso.

Fisher Sand & Gravel forma parte de Fisher Industries, una empresa integrada verticalmente que se encarga de proyectos como puentes, diques y carreteras, desde la fase de diseño hasta la inauguración. Se han convertido en líderes del sector en la construcción del muro fronterizo, conocidos por asumir proyectos ambiciosos con presupuestos astronómicos en terrenos que otros considerarían inviables. «En Fisher Industries nos gustan los trabajos difíciles; siempre elegimos los más complicados», declaró el director ejecutivo, Tommy Fisher, en un video promocional.

El propio Fisher atrajo mucha atención mediática durante el primer

mandato de Trump por su labor sobre el terreno con We Build the Wall, una organización sin ánimo de lucro fundada en 2018 por el activista de extrema derecha Brian Kolfage. Motivados por la convicción de que el gobierno federal no hacía lo suficiente para asegurar la frontera, We Build the Wall financió mediante micromecenazgo la construcción de tramos del muro fronterizo en Sunland Park, Nuevo México, y Mission, Texas, con un equipo de renombre que incluía a Steve Bannon, antiguo jefe de estrategia de Trump.

En 2020, Kolfage, Bannon y los también miembros del consejo asesor de We Build the Wall, Andrew Badolato y Timothy Shea, fueron acusados de desviar fondos de sus campañas de recaudación para beneficio personal. «Los acusados defraudaron a cientos de miles de donantes, aprovechándose de su interés en financiar un muro fronterizo para recaudar millones de dólares, bajo el falso pretexto de que todo ese dinero se destinaría a la construcción», escribió la fiscal federal Audrey Strauss en un comunicado de prensa. «Mientras aseguraban repetidamente a los donantes que Brian Kolfage, fundador y figura pública de We Build the Wall, no recibiría ni un centavo, los acusados conspiraron secretamente para transferirle cientos de miles de dólares, que él utilizó para financiar su lujoso estilo de vida». (Los cuatro hombres fueron finalmente declarados culpables; Bannon fue indultado por Trump al final de su mandato).

Si bien Fisher no estuvo explícitamente implicada en estos cargos penales, la firma se vio envuelta en problemas legales por su cuenta. En diciembre de 2019, la Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (CILA por sus siglas en inglés) presentó una demanda contra varios demandantes, entre ellos We Build

the Wall y Fisher Sand & Gravel, por lo que la agencia alegó que era un diseño deficiente del muro en el condado de Hidalgo, en el Valle del Río Grande.

Incluso en una época de sequía sin precedentes, el Río Grande sigue siendo salvaje e impredecible, haciendo honor a las diversas traducciones de su nombre como “Río Grande” o “Río Valiente”. Tanto el gobierno estadounidense como el mexicano han dedicado gran parte de los últimos dos siglos a litigar sobre la ubicación exacta de la línea divisoria entre ambos países y la cantidad de agua que cada uno puede utilizar, un tema polémico que ha derivado en violencia en los últimos años.

La demanda de la IBWC alega que el diseño del muro de Fisher violaba un tratado de 1944 entre Estados Unidos y México que regulaba el caudal del Río Grande, y específicamente una actualización de 1970 de dicho acuerdo que establecía la frontera internacional como “el centro del cauce ocupado durante las crecidas normales del río” y “prohibía cualquier obra en Estados Unidos que causara desviación u obstrucción del caudal normal del Río Grande”.

En otras palabras, la IBWC no creía en absoluto que la novedosa propuesta de Fisher —un muro fronterizo diseñado para permitir el paso del agua de las inundaciones— pudiera funcionar, y alegó que los planes presentados a la agencia para su revisión “carecían de fundamento”.

En su respuesta a la demanda de la IBWC, Fisher negó rotundamente que las acciones de la empresa violaran tratados internacionales y explicó que el gobierno federal había eximido del cumplimiento de las regulaciones ambientales para agilizar la construcción de barreras fronterizas en el condado de Hidalgo.



MARGRET GREBOWICZ

Un muro fronterizo construido en Nuevo México, similar a los muros edificados por Fisher Sand & Gravel.

El juez Randy Crane desestimó el caso en 2022 y se llegó a un acuerdo extraoficial que requería “inspecciones trimestrales, el mantenimiento de una compuerta existente que permite la liberación de las aguas pluviales y una fianza de 3 millones de dólares durante 15 años para cubrir cualquier gasto en caso de que la estructura falle”, según el *Texas Tribune*.

La demanda de la IBWC no fue el primer ni el último encuentro de Fisher Industries con el sistema judicial. Los registros de los tribunales federales muestran la participación de la empresa en más de cuarenta demandas. Una búsqueda del nombre de la empresa en Good Jobs First, una base de datos que rastrea los delitos de cuello blanco, arrojó 25 resultados, que van desde una multa de 1,16 millones de dólares impuesta por el Departamento de Justicia en 2009 por fraude fiscal hasta una multa de 5700 dólares por una infracción de seguridad laboral emitida en 2024.

En 2020, *Associated Press* informó sobre Fisher como una figura emergente en la industria del muro

fronterizo, quien había cabildeado personalmente con el presidente Trump a través de una aparición en *Fox & Friends*, prometiendo que su empresa utilizaba una tecnología “tan revolucionaria que es como comparar el iPhone con una cabina telefónica”. AP entrevistó a varias personalidades influyentes de Dakota del Norte que admiraban al franco constructor por su perspicacia empresarial.

En un extraño giro del destino, Fisher Sand & Gravel está demandando al DHS por incumplimiento de contrato en un tramo del muro fronterizo que la empresa construyó en el sector de El Paso de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza, alegando que el gobierno federal aún no le ha pagado más de 6,3 millones de dólares por servicios ya prestados.

El nuevo contrato de Fisher para construir en el condado de Presidio y el Parque Estatal Big Bend Ranch —otorgado el mismo día en que la exsecretaria de Seguridad Nacional, Kristi Noem, fue destituida de su cargo— ha generado preocupación entre los ambientalistas.

Laiken Jordahl, del Centro para la Diversidad Biológica, quien ha documentado exhaustivamente la construcción del muro fronterizo desde la primera administración Trump, declinó hacer comentarios específicos sobre el trabajo de Fisher Sand & Gravel, pero expresó su preocupación por cualquier proyecto de construcción a gran escala en Big Bend. “En Arizona, hemos presenciado con horror cómo los contratistas dinamitaban sitios culturales, excavaban acantilados y pavimentaban hábitats de vida silvestre para construir el muro fronterizo”, declaró al Sentinel. “En Big Bend, ahora que se han eliminado todas las protecciones ambientales, no hay límite para la destrucción maliciosa que infligirán. Se lucrarán destruyendo nuestro patrimonio natural. Y nos quedaremos con un frío muro de acero entre nosotros y el Río Grande”.

Fisher Industries no respondió a las múltiples solicitudes de comentarios sobre este artículo, ni tampoco los abogados que representan a la empresa en su demanda actual contra el DHS.

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¿Hay otras exenciones disponibles?

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Si es un veterano discapacitado, cónyuge sobreviviente o hijo sobreviviente de un veterano discapacitado, tiene derecho a una exención de una porción del valor tasado de su residencia. Esto incluye residencias donadas a veteranos discapacitados por organizaciones caritativas sin costo o no más del 50 por ciento de la estimación del valor de buena fe de mercado de la residencia, a los veteranos discapacitados y sus cónyuges sobrevivientes.

Si es un veterano discapacitado que recibe compensación de discapacidad de 100 por ciento debido a una discapacidad conectado al servicio y una calificación de 100 por ciento discapacitado con una determinación de que no puede cumplir ningún oficio del Departamento de la Administración de Veteranos de los Estado Unidos, tiene derecho a recibir una exención fiscal para la residencia del valor tasado total. Los cónyuges sobrevivientes de veteranos que calificaron para esta exención o que habrían calificado para esta exención si hubiera sido efectivo en el momento del fallecimiento del veterano también son elegibles con ciertas restricciones.

Si usted es el cónyuge sobreviviente de un miembro de las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos muerto o herido fatalmente en cumplimiento del deber, un cónyuge sobreviviente elegible de un primer respondedor muerto en cumplimiento del deber o un cónyuge sobreviviente de un veterano que murió como resultado de una condición o enfermedad calificada, usted tiene derecho a una exención de impuestos del valor total de tasación de su propiedad de residencia.

¿Tengo que aplicar cada año?

No. Si usted tenía una exención de la residencia en su hogar el año pasado no es necesario solicitar nuevamente a menos que el jefe de tasaciones lo requiera. Sin embargo, si usted no ha recibido una exención en su residencia actual o se mudó a una nueva residencia, debe de presentar una solicitud de exención. En caso de cumplir 65 durante este año, puede solicitar para la exención por edad de 65 o más hasta un año después de que cumplió 65. Y si usted se incapacitó, puede solicitar la exención de la persona discapacitada.

¿Cuándo y dónde puedo registrar?

Declare las solicitudes antes del 30 de abril en su oficina del distrito de tasaciones. Si necesita más tiempo, póngase en contacto con nosotros en:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
P O BOX 879/107 E TEXAS ST
MARFA, TEXAS 79843
(432)729-3431/PRESIDIO 229-3963

Este es un servicio público cortesía de su distrito de tasaciones local.

¡La tasación basada en la productividad de tierras agrícolas, ganaderas o madereras puede reducir impuestos!

Las leyes de Tejas permiten a los agricultores, rancheros, los manejadores de incendios forestales y los madereros a pagar los impuestos sobre la propiedad basado en el valor de la productividad de los terrenos y no en el valor de la propiedad en el mercado. Esto puede significar ahorros al pagar los impuestos de la propiedad.

¿Cuál es la fecha de vencimiento para solicitar?

Si el terreno nunca ha sido tasado en base a la productividad, o es usted un nuevo propietario, debe solicitar al distrito de tasaciones local antes del 1ero de mayo para tomar ventaja de este beneficio para los impuestos de la propiedad. Puede recibir hasta 60 días adicionales si presenta razón justa y solicita antes del primero de mayo. En caso de no cumplir con esta fecha, podrá solicitar, pero pagará una multa. Consulte con la oficina del distrito de tasaciones.

¿Debo solicitar la tasación anualmente?

Si los terrenos ya son tasados de acuerdo a la productividad agrícola o de madera, usualmente no tiene que volver a solicitar, a menos que el jefe de tasaciones lo exija. El distrito de tasaciones enviará un aviso por correo si necesita solicitar.

Para más información, llame o visite:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
P O BOX 879
107 E TEXAS ST
MARFA, TEXAS 79843
(432)729-3431/229-3963 PRESIDIO

Este es un servicio público cortesía de su distrito de tasaciones local.

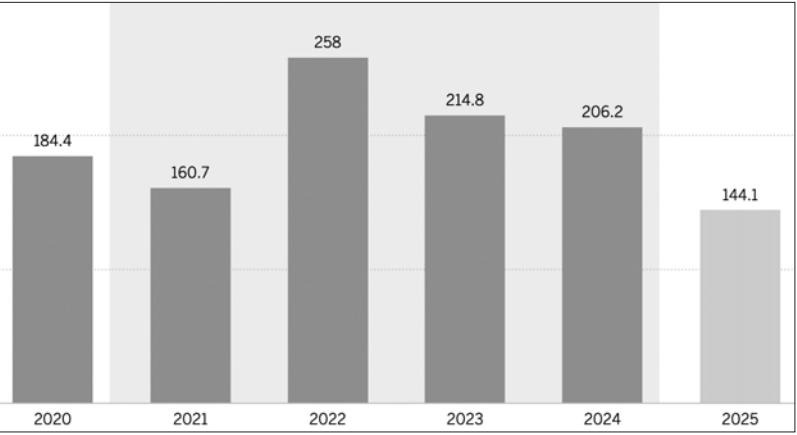
MARFAYISTA.COM

yearly under Biden than by Trump

The count by year

The number of Mexicans deported in 2025 was fewer than during the last year of the Biden administration.

Deportees, in thousands



MEXICO'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MIGRATION QUINTO ELEMENTAL LAB

Count for 2025 is through November. The institute reports deportations as return events at official repatriation points. A person may be returned more than once.

U.S.-California border is a journey of about 2,000 miles. In decades past, a state in central Mexico would be the likely source of the most immigrants, but cartels have waged bloody battles in Chiapas over the last decade, as criminal groups fought to control lucrative drug trafficking and migrant smuggling routes from Guatemala into Mexico. The hyper-violent Jalisco New Generation cartel, which started in the western state of Jalisco, is now a presence in far off Chiapas. The criminal group was vying for control of migrant smuggling routes there, according to security analysts, and fought bloody battles for the territory. Extortion of citizens skyrocketed as the group implemented its model of extorting communities they control to pay the salaries of foot soldiers. After Chiapas, the two other main states of origin for deported Mexicans were Guanajuato, with 11,552, and Guerrero, trailing just behind with 11,044. As in Chiapas, the Jalisco New Generation cartel now dominates life in parts of Guerrero, driving entire populations from their villages to take over the territory for its drug trafficking operations and opium growing. Cartels there have escalated their use of violence, using drone bombs to target not only their enemies and military convoys but also have used them to drive villagers from their homes. In one case in 2024, the Jalisco New Generation cartel dropped more than one hundred bombs on one community in the mountains of Guerrero in a 24-hour period, according to a former cartel operative who witnessed the bombings. The southern state of Oaxaca had the fifth-highest number of Mexican deportees—9,133. Oaxaca is one of the country's poorest states, with 16% of the population living in extreme poverty, according to government data. The state has long been an exporter of migrants to the U.S. look- Though migration is often driven by economic issues, the analysis found that many of the deported Mexicans came from states engulfed in cartel violence over the last decade.

ing for work to support their families at home. The trend found in the Quinto Elemento Lab analysis—that more Mexicans were deported annually under the Biden administration than the second Trump administration—is also reflected in statistics for deportees of all nationalities. An analysis of federal U.S. data by the New York Times shows that in 2025, the Trump administration deported about 540,000 people last year. That is 50,000 fewer than in 2023 and 110,000 fewer than 2024, the last year of the Biden administration. *Steve Fisher is an independent journalist based in Mexico City. This article was co-published with Puente News Collaborative, a bilingual nonprofit newsroom that covers stories from Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico border, the Los Angeles Times and Quinto Elemento Lab, an independent, nonprofit investigative journalism organization based in Mexico.*

OBITUARY

Passion for baseball, family guided Cordero



SAM CORDERO, of El Paso, Texas, devoted man to his family and the many he loved, passed away at the age of 66. Sam, a man whose life was defined by the steady work of his hands, strength of character and leadership and kindness of his heart, leaves behind a legacy that will forever resonate in the hearts of many in El Paso, Alpine and across Texas. Sam spent a long and respected career in the oil and gas industry. He coached and mentored youth and college baseball players at Sul Ross State University. Later in life he turned his passion for construction into his own business. He didn't just build structures; he built foundations for others to stand and grow on. Sam was the "first call" for many in his life. He was the steady voice on the other end of the line when a check engine light came on—whether that light was on a car's dashboard, a new construction plan or in a loved one's heart. His advice was solid and sound, and his ability to listen was his greatest gift to those he loved. Sam's heart always belonged to the baseball diamond. He was the first of two high school baseball players in El Paso drafted by a professional baseball team in 1978. His love for the game stayed with him throughout his life, demonstrated in the grit, teamwork, and passion he poured into being a son, brother, dad, and grandpa. Above all else, Sam loved fiercely, finding his greatest joy in the presence of his children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, sisters and the family he deeply loved. Sam is preceded in death by his beloved mother, Mary P. Cordero, and father, Jesse Cordero. He leaves his children, Gabriela Cordero, Samuel-David Cordero, Stephan Urias, Regina Wong (Erwyn); grandchildren, Beaux, Baeya, Mateo, Kamila, Rogelio; sisters Sandra Urias (Fernando), Diane Grado (Robert), Virginia Cordero, Jessica Cordero (Todd); nieces and nephews; and many aunts, uncles and cousins. The family received friends and loved ones for a visitation on Tuesday, March 17, from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., followed by the recitation of the most Holy Rosary from 6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Alpine Memorial Funeral Home Chapel, 209 W. Sul Ross Ave. in Alpine, Texas. Funeral Mass was celebrated on Wednesday, March 18, at 10:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, 406 S 6th St. in Alpine. Interment followed the Mass at Holy Angels Cemetery located at E Avenue I in Alpine, Texas. Floral Tributes: In honor of Sam's memory, flowers may be sent through: Paloma Floral Events & Decor (432) 837-2227, 409 E Avenue E, Alpine, Texas. Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine and gifts and condolences may be left by visiting www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.

A variety of homestead exemptions could lower your property taxes!

A homestead exemption lowers the school district property taxes on your home by lowering its value. If your home is valued at \$150,000 and you receive a \$140,000 homestead exemption, your home will be taxed as if it were worth \$10,000.

Who qualifies for an exemption?

Anyone who owns a home on Jan. 1 and uses it as a primary residence on that date is entitled to a \$140,000 homestead exemption to lower school taxes. A person who acquires property after Jan. 1 may receive the residence homestead exemption for the applicable portion of that tax year immediately on qualification for the exemption if the preceding owner did not receive the same exemption for that tax year. It doesn't matter if your home is a house, condominium or mobile home. Counties, cities and special taxing districts may also offer homestead exemptions.

Are other exemptions available?

If you're disabled—or if you're age 65 or older—you are entitled to an additional \$60,000 school tax exemption on your home. And if you qualify for the age 65 or older or disabled exemption, you're also entitled to a permanent, locked-in "ceiling" on the school property taxes on your home. The county, city or junior college may adopt a tax ceiling for age 65 or older or disabled homeowners. The age 65 or older homeowners school tax ceiling transfers to the surviving spouse if he/she is age 55 or older at the time of death, lives in and owns the home. Age 65 or older homeowners (or their surviving spouses age 55 or older) also may transfer the percentage of school tax paid, based on their former home's school tax ceiling, to a new home.

If you are a disabled veteran, surviving spouse or surviving child of a disabled veteran, you are entitled to an exemption of a portion of your residence homestead's appraised value. This includes homesteads donated to disabled veterans by charitable organizations at no cost or not more than 50 percent of the good faith estimate of the homestead's market value to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses.

If you're a disabled veteran awarded 100 percent disability compensation due to a service-connected disability and a rating of 100 percent disabled or a determination of individual unemployability from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, you are entitled to an exemption from taxation of your residence homestead's total appraised value. Surviving spouses of veterans who qualified for this exemption or who would have qualified for this exemption if it had been effective at the time of the veteran's death are also eligible with certain restrictions.

If you are the surviving spouse of a U.S. armed services member killed or fatally injured in the line of duty, an eligible surviving spouse of a first responder killed in the line of duty or a surviving spouse of a veteran who died as a result of a qualifying condition or disease you are entitled to an exemption from taxation of your residence homestead's total appraised value.

Do I have to apply each year?

No. If you had a homestead exemption on your home last year, you won't need to reapply unless your chief appraiser requires it. However, if you haven't received an exemption on your present home—or if you've moved to a new home—you'll need to file an application for exemption. If you are age 65 this year, you may file for the age 65 or older exemption up to one year after the date you became age 65. And if you became disabled, you may file for the disabled person's exemption.

When and where should I file?

File applications by April 30 at your local appraisal district office. If you need more time, contact us at:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DIST.
P O BOX 879
107 E TEXAS ST.
MARFA, TEXAS 79843
(432)729-3431/PRESIDIO 229-3963

A public service announcement courtesy of your local appraisal district.

MARFA PUBLIC RADIO

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Take our listener survey

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Scan the QR code or go to marfapublicradio.org/survey

MAC SEPTIC PORTA POTTIES

Rick McIvor

Owner / Operator

325-812-5541

RickMcIvor7@gmail.com

P.O. Box 640, Fort Davis, TX 79734

COCHINEAL

MARFA

CASUAL FINE DINING IN FAR WEST TEXAS

107 West San Antonio Street

Marfa, Texas 79843

432 729 3300 - cochinealmarfa.com



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www.marfainsurance.com



KING

LAND & WATER

Protecting Clients. Conserving the Land.

Big Bend Regional Hospital District

Medical Enhancement Grants

BBRHD is now accepting grant proposals for the Spring FY2026 Medical Enhancement Grant program. The deadline to apply for funding is March 20, 2026 for the spring grant cycle.

Brewster and Presidio County entities providing healthcare or other related services, consistent with the mission and objectives of the Hospital District may be eligible to apply.

The grant application package and additional information are available at www.bigbendhealth.org or call 432-837-7051.



BIG BEND

HEALTH



ALPINE SMALL ANIMAL PRACTICE

AND LARGE ANIMAL SERVICES

Mary Dodson, D.V.M.

Zachary Dodson, D.V.M.

3201 N. HWY 118, Box 7

Alpine, Texas 79830

432-837-5416

Mon. - Fri. 7:45 - 12:00 & 1:30 - 5:30

after hours - emergency 432.837.5416



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BIG BEND

Sentinel

Published by Sentinel News Project, a Texas non-profit organization



AROUND
THE BIG BEND

Thursday March 19

County Court
Criminal Docket

10:00am-10:15am

Fort Davis, TX

Rock N’ Rolling
at the Hoodoos

10:00am-11:00am

Big Bend Ranch State Park

Terlingua, TX



The Feather Wars -
The Great Crusade
to Save America's Birds

7:00pm-8:00pm

Davis Mountains State Park

Fort Davis, TX

Friday March 20



Live Music:
Hogan & Moss

6:30pm-9:30pm

Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave

Alpine, TX

Saturday March 21

Skyline Drive Geology Tour

10:00am-11:30am

Davis Mountains State Park

Fort Davis, TX



Los Yonke Gallos VS
Alpine Cattle Dogs

3:30pm at Vizcaino Field, FREE

Follow @losyonkegallsdemarf

& @alpine_cattle_dogs

Marfa, TX

Live Music:
Rome Antenucci

7:00pm-10:00pm

Alpine, TX

Sunday March 22



Boxing at Maintenant

9:00am-11:00am

Maintenant

825 Rabbits Rd.

Marfa, TX

Sunday Slow Stretch
with Bailey

4:00pm-5:00pm

La Sala Studio

207 E Holland Ave

Alpine, TX

Monday March 23

School Board Meeting

Marfa, TX

Tuesday March 24

Commissioner’s Court
Regular Meeting

9:30am-12:00am

Alpine, TX

Regular Commissioners’
Court Meeting

10:00am-11:00am

Fort Davis, TX

Trivia Tuesday!

7:00pm-9:00pm

Alcove Social

211 E Holland Ave

Alpine, TX

CROSSWORD

Duped

By Jonathan Raksin

3/19

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16				
17					18					19				
20								21						
22					23			24						
		25	26					27						
28	29						30			31	32	33	34	
35					36	37				38		39		
40				41		42					43			
			44		45					46				
47	48	49		50			51	52			53		54	55
56			57				58		59	60				
61						62						63		
64								65				66		
67					68							70		

Edited by Taylor Johnson

ACROSS

1 Thai currency

5 Obliterates, in gamer-speak

9 ___ and sweet

14 Medicinal succulent

15 Underground part of a tree

16 Grinding tooth

17 *Lounge lazily (In this clue's answer, note letters 1-5)

19 Friendliness

20 Increase sevenfold

21 Hordes

22 "Painting to Be Stepped On" artist

23 Chat room overseer

24 Colonial housing unit?

25 *Chilled (... letters 4-7)

28 Fast-track program at the airport, briefly

30 Feel unwell

31 Air kiss sound

35 Greek I

36 Fill up again, as a dishwasher

39 Be in debt

40 Combines, as resources

42 *Ryan Reynolds or Rob McEl-henny, to Wrexham's pro foot-ballers (... letters 4-6)

44 Design deet

46 Some heirs

47 ___ on the back

50 Bumbling

53 High-pitched barks

56 Reunion participants

58 *Part of the Constitution that establishes the legislative branch (letters 6-8)

61 Given false hope ... or a hint to this puzzle's theme

63 Pet doc

64 Bicycles built for two

65 Yank

66 First lady?

67 Museum display

68 Knock loudly

69 Messy space

70 Hi-___ image

DOWN

1 Low opera voice

2 Extraterres-trial

3 Kids' vegetable-passing game

4 Udder part

5 Field in which raises happen often?

6 "___ ever lie to you?"

7 Zero

8 The "S" of PST: Abbr.

9 Know-how

10 "Blue," for "blew"

11 Martini garnish

12 Evaluates

13 Lovers' rendezvous

18 Bit of gossip

21 Genetic testing facilities

24 Vowel quintet

26 October gems

27 Brontosaurus descriptor

28 Gratuity

29 Phillipa of "Hamilton"

32 Took second, say

33 Fill with wonder

34 That lady

37 Behold, in Latin

38 Follower of "Scooby-"

41 Fidget ___ (toy)

43 "Radiolab" producer

45 Mystery

47 Ziti or penne

48 Where to exchange vows

49 Intoxicated, informally

51 Chum

52 Moderate gaits

54 Annoy

55 Locations

57 Coffee, slangly

59 Letter-shaped fastener

60 Rapper

62 Egyptian viper

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

3/12

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www.upuzzles.com

SUDUKO

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

SOLUTION:

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

3/12

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LETTER

Hotel restorations moving forward

TO OUR NEIGHBORS in Alpine and Fort Davis, we know many of you have been waiting patiently to see the restoration of the Holland Hotel, the Maverick Inn, and Hotel Limpia begin. We're grateful to announce that the work is finally moving forward.

It took longer than we hoped to reach this point. Over the past few years, we've heard from many of you who care deeply about these places, and we want you to know that we've heard that message clearly. We're grateful for the patience the communities of Alpine and Fort Davis have shown.

These hotels have been part of the life of their towns for generations. For nearly a century, the Holland, the Maverick, and the Limpia have stood along the highways and town squares of Alpine and Fort Davis, welcoming travelers after long miles on the road. Over time they have become part of the landscape of daily life. We understand that they are more than businesses; they are part of the communities.

Our goal is to restore these properties thoughtfully and re-

turn them to the place they have historically held in the life of Alpine and Fort Davis.

We're excited to start construction, but realistic that this is only another beginning. The restorations themselves will also take time, and we know we'll run into unexpected obstacles along the way. Our goal is to minimize disruptions and keep the properties open wherever possible.

When complete, each hotel will include restaurants and bars open to the public, along with spaces for events, live music, and community gatherings. We hope these hotels

will once again serve not only as places for travelers to stay, but as welcoming centers of town life.

We know the delays have not been easy, and we're grateful for the patience you've shown while we worked to reach this point. West Texas has always been a place that rewards persistence, and we're excited to finally begin the work of restoring these historic hotels so they can continue serving these communities for many decades to come.

—COLLIN BIBB
and BRIAN CARRICO
Byways Hospitality



HOLLAND HOTEL

Alpine's historic hotel was designed by the Texas architect Henry C. Frost.

CLASSIFIEDS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC AWARENESS

LEGAL NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Wine and Malt Beverage Retailer's On-Premise Permit by Boxes, LLC, dba Boxes, to be located at 1411 W San Antonio St, Marfa, Presidio County, Texas. The owner of said corporation is William Floyd, member.

PUBLIC NOTICE

AUCTION AND SALE OF ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLES

Pursuant to the authority granted under the Texas Transportation Code, Section 683.011, and/or Section 683.031: and having complied with the notification procedures required on Section 683.012 of this Article, the Sheriff, Presidio County, Marfa, Texas, shall conduct an auction and sale of abandoned motor vehicles at 10:00 A. M., Saturday, March 28, 2026, at the following location: outside the Marfa Airport Impound Lot, Hwy 17 N, Marfa, TX 79843.

Abandoned vehicles to be sold are:

YEAR & MODEL UNKNOWN, CARRY ON TRAILER, PARTIAL VIN ONLY

1994 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTJW35G2REA46245

1999 GMC UT, VIN: 1GKEK13R2XJ704614

2000 GMC PK, VIN: 1GTEK19T1YE127180

2002 CHEV PK, VIN: 3GNEK13T82G137012

2003 BUIC UT, VIN: 3G5DA03E93S551683

2003 CHEV PK, VIN: 1GCEC14X83Z249284

2005 CHEV 2D, VIN: 2G1WW12E359198392

2005 CHEV VN, VIN: 1GNDV23L05D266923

2008 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTSX21R08ED31723

2011 DODG AM, VIN: 3D6WA7EL8BG503903

2012 FORD PK, VIN: 1FTFX1ET2CKD44775

2014 CHEV 4D, VIN: 1G1125S32EU108938

2017 TOYT LL, VIN: JTMRJREV8HD102888

2019 CHEV UT, VIN: 3GNCJLSB5KL188196

Danny Dominguez, Sheriff, Presidio County Sheriff's Office, P.O. Drawer V, Marfa, Texas (432) 729-4308

CITY OF MARFA REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES 2026 MARFA STREETS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The City of Marfa, Texas seeks a qualified engineering firm for the 2026 Marfa Streets Improvement Project. The scope of the project is removal and replacement of select existing roadways. Services include preparation of detailed engineering plans, specifications, cost estimates, assistance with the bidding process, construction oversight, and final project certification. The project will be accomplished with current funds. The entire RFQ can be found at cityofmarfa.com under the Administration tab.

Interested individual(s) or firms should submit a written statement of qualifications to Mayor Manuel Baeza via email, regular mail, delivery service, or hand delivery to City Hall (including mail slot). The submittal should include a proposed contract, along with a list of current and former clients in far west Texas. Sealed submittals must be received at the following address no later than 4:00 pm (CDT) on March 19, 2026:

City of Marfa
RFQ Engineering Services
2026 Marfa Streets
Improvement Project
Attn: Mayor Manuel Baeza
mbaeza@cityofmarfa.com
113 S. Highland Avenue
P.O. Box 787 (USPS address)
Marfa, TX 79843

Sealed Proposals will be opened on March 23, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. in the Casner Room at Marfa City Hall (address above). The engineering firm will be chosen at the Regular Marfa City Council Meeting on March 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the same location. The Marfa City Council will use a qualifications-based selection process in accordance with the Professional Services Procurement Act (Texas Government Code Chapter 2254). Selection is contingent upon proof of professional liability coverage for errors and omissions.

The City of Marfa reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, and to waive any irregularities in the process. The City will not be responsible in the event the U.S. Postal Service or any other carrier system fails to deliver the proposal to the City by the given deadline above, or for any delays in delivery. The City of Marfa is an equal-opportunity employer.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS MARFA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT'S STATE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY RATING

Marfa Independent School District will hold a public meeting at 6:00 p.m. March 23, 2026 in the Marfa Board Room 400 W Lincoln Marfa, TX 79843

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss Marfa Independent School District's rating on the state's financial accountability system.

HELP WANTED

THE CITY OF PRESIDIO IS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF ONE UTILITY WORKER WITH THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT. THIS IS A FULL-TIME POSITION. THIS POSITION WORKS UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR. A UTILITY WORKER PERFORMS VARIOUS WORK ASSIGNMENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT.

CANDIDATES MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

• MUST BE LEGAL TO WORK IN THE US

• MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE

• VALID COMMERCIAL DRIVER LICENSE WITH A PROVEN GOOD DRIVING RECORD

• MUST HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT

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THE STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY COURT

COUNTY OF PRESIDIO

CITATION BY PUBLICATION

IN THE ESTATE OF: JOSE A. RODRIGUEZ

CAUSE: 2070

TO ALL PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE ESTATE OF Juana Montoya Perez, Deceased, Docket No. 2070, County Court, Presidio County, Texas. APPLICATION TO DETERMINE HEIRSHIP AND APPLICATION FOR DEPENDENT ADMISISTRATION AND LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION filed in the County Court of Presidio County, Texas, on the 16th day of September, 2025.

Said application may be heard and acted on by said Court at 10 o'clock A.M. on the first Monday next after the expiration of ten days from date of publishing this citation, at the County Courthouse in Marfa, Texas.

All persons interested in said estate are hereby cited to appear before said Honorable Court by filing a written answer contesting such application should they desire to do so.

All interested persons are further advised that they have the right to employ an attorney and that if they or their attorney fail to file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of ten days after the publishing of this citation, the court may enter orders with binding effects upon said persons.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF SAID COURT at office in Marfa, Texas, this the 16th day of September, 2025

Carolina a. Catano
Clerk of the County Court,
Presidio County, Texas
By: Melissa DePonde
Deputy
Clerk's Address: P.O. Box 789
Marfa, Texas 79843

OPINION

Eyes on government can track taxpayer money, expose wrongdoing

AS WE watch over our government, it's often about the money. Are taxpayer dollars being spent wisely on social programs, road projects and employee pay? Can we view government contracts with outside organizations? What are the details of bond proposals on the election ballot?

Long-established state open government laws—the Texas Public Information Act and the Texas Open Meetings Act—help us answer these questions and root out malfeasance. As we celebrate national Sunshine Week March 15-21, let's recognize our transparency laws and learn how to keep them strong.

Beyond detecting financial waste and fraud, journalists and vigilant citizens are using these laws to retrieve videos related to suspected crimes against kids, to identify finalists for top jobs in cities and school districts and to review the emergency response after the tragic Hill Country floods.

The Texas Public Information Act and the Open Meetings Act are more than 50 years old and continue to be adapted to modern times and troubles.

Open government advocates worked with legislators last year to establish stricter requirements for public officials responding to records requests. There are now more consequences when a government ignores a request.

Another new law requires public meeting notices to be posted at least three business days, rather than 72 hours, before the meeting. That prevents a notice from getting overlooked if it is first posted on a weekend. This common-sense law also specifies that if a budget is to be considered at the meeting a copy of that proposed budget must be posted for public view in advance.

There's always more work to do to better equip citizens and to prevent public officials from eroding transparency laws through loopholes and game-playing.

Those who must resort to lawsuits to force the release

of public information deserve reimbursement for attorneys' fees if they win the case. Governments that hire private lawyers to handle public records requests need to disclose who those attorneys are and how much they are paying them. And there should be penalties for governments that abuse Texas' attorney general open records ruling system.

The attorney general's office serves as an umpire of sorts, issuing rulings when governments want to try to withhold information. State law presumes records are open unless an exception in the law allows them to be kept secret. A government generally cannot withhold information on its own and must ask permission from the attorney general's open records division to do so.

Unfortunately, many request rulings even if the information is clearly public and should have been released promptly. Bad faith ruling requests add to the attorney general's workload and cause weeks or months of delays for requestors.

Finally, charges for public records can be excessive, sometimes reaching thousands or tens of thousands of dollars. If an estimated charge is too high, it can deter a requester from pursuing the inquiry, letting the government off the hook and keeping information hidden. In some cases, requesters are required to pay the cost up front, then the government seeks to withhold that information by asking for an attorney general ruling. That means the requestor's moneysits in the government's bank account for weeks or months until a decision is made.

In so many ways, money plays a role in open government. It's crucial to follow the finances and stand staunchly against all kinds of waste and abuse.

Protecting the free flow of information helps ensure that governments answer to its citizens.

—KELLEY SHANNON.

Kelley Shannon is executive director of the Austin-based nonprofit Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas.

Safer than a wall: Cross-border communities

IREMEMBER BACK in the days when the border in the Big Bend was a safe place to visit and a friendly place to hang out. The small towns along the border were international communities. Friends and families lived on both sides of the border, and we could cross freely without any concerns.

I believe those days living on the border were safer than anytime within the past 50 years. It was 1981. I had moved to Alpine to get a degree in biology at Sul Ross State University. I would spend just about every other weekend driving down south exploring Big Bend National Park and learning to boat on the Rio Grande. I told my professors I was doing field work, but in reality, the border was my playground.

Small colonias such as Candalaria in the United States and San Antonio del Bravo across the Rio in Mexico had a K-6 one-room schoolhouse that taught children from both sides of the river. The same with Lajitas and Paso Lajitas. Our children were educated at the same school in Terlingua. This was not only for the advantage of the children but helped increase the enrollment for the Terlingua schools and helped to keep the doors open.

At one time Terlingua was known to have had the longest school bus ride in the U.S., 100 miles one way to Alpine. These communities were known to have Class B ports of entry. If any goods or products were to be crossed over you were supposed to call CBP, and they would meet you at the border so you could make your declarations and pay any taxes.

Other than that, people could cross freely on foot or pay \$1 for the row boat. You could even drive across the river if you had 4-wheel drive and high clearance. I did it several times. I remember asking a Border Patrol agent if I could



VICTOR EL-SHABAZZ

The small Mexican town of Paso Lajitas, across from Lajitas, was abandoned after the informal crossing between the two communities was closed down after 9/11.

get in trouble crossing over in my vehicle at Lajitas and he said, "If you are not carrying drugs or contraband or transporting a UDA (undocumented alien) and you can prove you are a U.S. citizen, there is no reason to detain you." We would still ask the locals if "la frontera es tranquilo?" just to avoid getting hassled by the Border Patrol. In those days many of the river guides would help our neighbors in Mexico with construction projects in Boquillas or Paso Lajitas and vice versa. We shared meals together either in Mexico or the U.S. We were an international community in every sense of the word. Life was good.

Every October, the National Park would sponsor a fiesta in Rio Grande Village to celebrate the partnership between the U.S. and Mexico. They called it Good Neighbor Day. Vendors from both sides would set up booths, and there would be folklorico performances and music from both sides. It was one of my favorite events to attend. There was pretty much an open dialog between the two countries. It was easy to find out what was going on in Mexico, good or bad. We would help each other out.

It was law enforcement from both sides of the border working

with each other that finally took down the border drug lord, Pablo Acosta. Of course there was a fair amount of drug smuggling going on, still is and always will be as long as the U.S. needs to feed its addiction to drugs and money is to be made. No wall will protect us from that.

Then the 9-11 terrorist attacks happened. The terrorists that hijacked and flew the planes into the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon came to the U.S. on travel and student visas and some crossed the port of entry from Canada. None of them came from the Mexican border. The order came from George W. Bush to close the borders. On April 10, 2002, a van pulled into the parking lot at the Lajitas Trading Post. It had the name and logo of a river guide company on the side. People were thinking that there must be a new river tour company in town. The Lajitas employees were waiting in line to cash their pay checks, buy supplies and head across the river to Paso Lajitas where they lived.

Border Patrol agents poured out of the vans demanding identification. Many were U.S. citizens but preferred to live in Paso Lajitas, and the ones that were not were hauled off. At the river

crossing the row boat was parked on the Mexican side. A Hispanic woman was urging the young boatman to come to the American side to give her a ride across the river. The boatman had heard about the chaos at the trading post and told her he couldn't come get her. She pleaded with him and he begrudgingly crossed the river. When he reached the other side, she handcuffed him and confiscated his boat. His mother watched from the Mexican side of the river and broke down crying. It was Mother's Day in Mexico.

From that day on the border was no longer safe nor a friendly place to hang out. People moved out of these small Mexican border towns like Santa Elena, since there was no money flow from tourism. The cartels began to fill the void. I lost touch with many of my friends in Mexico. Every once in a while, I see them when I visit Ojinaga, but what was will never be again.

This is why I worry so much about what will happen when they put up a border wall. It will not make us safer; it will not slow down the flow of immigrants. As former President of Mexico Vicente Fox said, all it takes is a \$25 ladder to defeat a multi-billion-dollar border wall. The damage the border wall will do can never be justified.

Washington is a long way from the border, and it will never understand the problems that it will introduce to our communities on the border. If the Trump administration and Congress could pass a comprehensive immigration policy, it will go a lot further than a mult-billion-dollar border wall that taxpayers are footing the bill for. I would love to see the Good Neighbor Day event return, but it seems we are going in the opposite direction.

—DAVID F. LONG
Shafter

BIG BEND

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ART *Sentinel*

Hidden on the border: A crumbling adobe's colorful cartoons



Etta Hulme prepares for next steps by creating a Red Rabbit photo on the border before she heads to Chicago to work on the comic series. Unknown is who painted the Presidio County ranch map.

JENNIFER PITTINGER

Celebrated cartoonist joined a Marfa woman in the 1950s to paint a wacky look at ranch life

THE FLOOR CRUNCHES under your feet—broken glass, old roofing material, hopefully not followed by the piercing of a rusty nail. Yellowed newspaper and piles of dirt are scattered through the rooms of this abandoned and crumbling adobe house.

Yet, although there is a need to tread lightly, it isn't a deterrence to exploring. Because adorning the still-intact walls are giant, whimsical painted scenes, murals of sorts, from the Far West Texas past.

Here's a dog, hot cattle brand in mouth, chasing a rancher, mouth agape. A busty woman emerges in a robe from a "ladies shower" amidst a bunkhouse full of men preparing to enact horrendous pranks on each other—one with a beartrap for a bare foot, another with a flower to tickle a bare foot, a man in the shadows ready to alight gunpowder, and another filling cowboy boots with who knows what. Another painting is a detailed map of Presidio County ranches.

The lively scenes were painted long ago by Evelyn Raetzch Davis, a kin to families who play deep in the origins of Marfa, along with a companion—Etta Hulme, the first woman to gain the ranks of nationally syndicated political cartoonists in the 1970s.

I'm not going to tell you where the house resides, nor will I relate a lot more information on it that would give it away, other than to say it's tucked deep away in deep thickets of mesquite. In some

ways it's kind of silly, since a parade of the curious and plain old beer drinking, partying kids have been there without defacing any of the works. But with a tinge of caution, it will remain a bit of a mystery, something you know the Big Bend holds, but not where—except to say it's on the border. (Full disclosure: We even erased a couple words from a painting that would have given away the location.)

Evelyn Davis' granddaughter shed a bit of light on the house. According to Big Bend native Pam Park, Davis and Hulme used the land as a kind of retreat to practice painting, let loose some creative energy, and have a few drinks. We can't hear directly from Davis and Hulme, as they are deceased.

Only one of the paintings is signed and dated—a bucktoothed rabbit cowboy on a goofy looking horse—marked "POX" and "Sept. 1950." Hulme used POX as a signature at times, so it's clearly her creation. The other paintings are decidedly different, likely Davis' style, although you can see bits of Hulme in some of them.

Hulme got her start working for Disney animation studios in the late 1940s, and worked on the film *Song of the South*. We know she landed a job in Chicago in late 1950 for a publishing company, so the house painting must have been a trip to Far West Texas shortly before that.

In Chicago she worked on a series of Red Rabbit comics (a parody of the popular Western Red Ryder comics) with the rabbit and his companion horse, Glueball, getting into wacky adventures. The rabbit and horse are nearly identical to those painted in the house, so it might have been practice for her eventual job.

A rare woman in the world of political cartoons.

HULME EVENTUALLY became one of the country's most respected cartoonists, creating thousands of scathing looks at political figures through the '70s until 2008, starting at the *Texas Observer* and then spending the bulk of her career at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. She died in 2014 at her home in Arlington, Texas.

Davis became a teacher at the Blackwell School but also painted around Marfa, including on the walls of the former Carmen's Restaurant. Park said she often met up with other teachers and those interested in art. "It was kind of like almost a secret society type thing," she says. "They just did their own thing."



Marfa's Evelyn Davis captures hijinks in a ranch bunkhouse.

JENNIFER PITTINGER

An Austin friend, Matt Baker, who owns property in Terlingua, made his discovery of the house about a decade ago and then led *Big Bend Sentinel* photographer Jennifer Pittinger on a tour. Baker's fascination with the paintings have led to a deep passion for them to be preserved. "I want to see a way to let the public see these works, while also making sure they are protected and preserved," he says.

Hearing stories from the time, I realized so much more history related to the house could be written, which led me to wonder how long it will even survive the winds and monsoons. The Presidio County Historical Commission is aware of the situation and has commissioned a photographer to document it, which may be an opportunity to write that history.

One key feature that needs to be preserved is a signature wall where hundreds of visitors have left their names and, sometimes, date they visited. Also discussed is removing the walls, or layers of them, to display elsewhere—a daunting task due to their condition.

Davis' great-granddaughter, Presidio County Attorney Blair Park, is also in the loop on the future of the house. "I think it's really cool that there is interest in preserving my family's history, which I'm really proud of," she says. "That pride in multigenerational local history means even more now that I'm raising my own kid here—the 'next generation,' so to speak."

Until that history is written, know that at least for one short time in Presidio County history, likely with the heat of the border blaring outside, two women stood and painted the days away, letting their imaginations of the wild side of ranch life run free.

Anyone who would like to share more history on the house can email editor@bigbendsentinel.com. You can see more photos, in color, at bigbendsentinel.com. For a deeper look at Hulme, including a collection of the thousands of comics she drew, see: sites.libraries.uta.edu/ettahulme

—ROB D'AMICO



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Etta Hulme at work at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.