

Judge halts border barrier construction in Big Bend

So far, six lawsuits have been filed over the wall.

By Sam Karas

EL PASO — A judge on Friday blocked further border barrier construction in the Big Bend region, approving an environmental group’s motion for a preliminary injunction.

At the end of Friday’s hearing, U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone asked the courtroom to remain calm while she read her order aloud from the bench.

She ruled that the plaintiffs’ constitutional claims to halt the construction were likely to succeed and her preliminary injunction against “ground-disturbing activities” would remain in effect while the suit continued to play out in court.

The legal team at the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental advocacy group, filed the lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security and its secretary in April on behalf of the Friends of the Ruidosa Church, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving a historic church in Presidio County, and Danny William Miller, a Rio Grande river guide and landowner who stands to lose his property in Redford to the wall.

The lawsuit argues that the five contracted border wall projects in the region are unconstitutional for a range of reasons, including violating the constitutional separation of powers and depriving citizens of their land.

The suit documents what could be lost to border barrier construction along the Rio Grande if it’s allowed to proceed. Zeynep Graves, a lawyer with the Center for Biological Diversity, said in her closing arguments that the impact of wall construction in the Big Bend affected the community at all levels. “The harm reaches far beyond the landscape itself,” she said.

In emotional testimony, Miller compared the government building a wall across his property and blocking his access to the river to “a bullet to the head.”

Miller said once altered, the desert landscapes could never be replaced, and his work as a river guide would become “a tour of the military industrial complex, rather than a tour of the wilderness.”

Hudspeth County resident Bill Guerra-Addington testified that a border barrier would be a death sentence for his ranch on the Texas-Mexico border. “They’re taking the river away from us, and it’s devastating,” he said.

The government claims that physical border infrastructure is necessary, even in remote and

lightly-trafficked areas like the Big Bend, to achieve what it calls “operational control” of the border — zero unauthorized border crossings.

“Since the President took office, DHS has delivered the most secure border in history,” former DHS Secretary Kristi Noem wrote in a series of waivers that eased contracting laws across the entire southwest border. “More can be done, however.”

The Big Bend sector, which includes Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park, covers about a quarter of the length of the border but only sees between 1% and 3% of migrant apprehensions by U.S. Customs and Border Protection each year.

Since news of the government’s plans for border barriers in Big Bend broke in January 2026, a grassroots bipartisan backlash has formed across the region, slowly pushing the government to adjust its plans for physical border infrastructure — walls, roads, fences, lights, sensors and more — totaling over \$7.5 billion in government contracts.

In response to the public outcry, DHS officials have countered with hypotheticals about what could happen in Big Bend if migrant traffic shifts in response to wall

In emotional testimony, Miller compared the government building a wall across his property and blocking his access to the river to “a bullet to the head.”

construction elsewhere along the southern border. CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott issued a statement that the agency’s goal was to protect the national park from future cartel activity.

Despite the scale of the opposition, contractors have been bulldozing new roads in the park after the government waived the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Protection Act to support the “expeditious construction of barriers and roads” along the border. So far, six lawsuits have been filed over the Big Bend wall. On Thursday, a judge rejected a request for a temporary restraining order in a different case that sought to halt work in and around Big Bend National Park, which had been paused through the month of September.

This story was originally copublished with The Texas Tribune on October 2.



SAM KARAS.

Maxie Adler and Natalie Newman, whose photo documentation of wall construction in Big Bend National Park were featured as exhibits in Friday’s hearing, embrace after Judge Cardone’s ruling.

Big Bend artists band together against the wall

By Sam Karas

MARFA — For many people who live in and love the Big Bend region, the idea of a steel border wall through some of the country’s most remote and wild landscapes has been a difficult pill to swallow. Almost a year into the saga, the issue has trickled down through social media posts and newspaper articles and lawsuit filings into one of the region’s primary exports — fine art.

For Presidio-based artist Yosdy Valdivia, her strong emotions over the wall took shape as Mother of the Desert II, an oil on masonite painting of nature embodied as a weeping woman, whose tears become the Rio Grande. When Valdivia opened the doors to Galeria Raices in 2024, she never expected that her small business would one day become a campaign stop for Gina Hinojosa, the Democrat running against Gov. Greg Abbott — the first gubernatorial candidate ever to visit the sleepy border city.

Hinojosa’s team descended on

Galeria Raices, helping Valdivia don microphones and get the shop campaign social media ready. But when the candidate herself arrived, all of the bustle and pretension faded, and the two women were able to connect heart-to-heart about their experiences growing up on the border. “She had a motherly aura to her, she was mostly just listening,” Valdivia said. “I didn’t see her as this crazy famous person, this politician that potentially could be our next governor.”

Of all the things the two talked about, one issue loomed above the rest: the border wall. Valdivia’s shop is just one of numerous Big Bend businesses allied in the fight against the giant infrastructure project. Politicians as ideologically distant as Hinojosa, a Democrat with a focus on public education, and Brandon Herrera, a First Amendment influencer turned Republican congressional candidate with an edgelord sense of humor, have made fighting the wall part of their ground game in the Big Bend — an area whose remote location and and sparse

population usually prompt statewide candidates to skip it entirely on the campaign trail.

On the other edge of the greater Big Bend region, in the tiny town of Sanderson, the Yellow Brick Art Co. serves a similar dual function as a spot to check out local art and get educated about how the border wall fight is impacting locals. Gallery owner and artist Keirstin Pratt committed her frustration to canvas back in August, when videos by wildlife photographer Natalie Newman of bulldozers tearing into the ground in front of the iconic Santa Elena Canyon went viral.

Pratt was working a festival during the height of the construction activity in the park. “I didn’t get a chance to feel and grieve what was going on,” she said, and in her spare moments, she started bringing a scene inspired by Newman’s videos to life: javelinas standing in the path of a bulldozer.

The piece, Pra(e)y, is a major departure for Pratt, who says she’s typically inspired by the beauty

Continued on page 6

Jury trial in Brite Ranch battle canceled

Sibling sister quits attempt to stop the partition of the ranch

By Rob D’Amico

MARFA — In a new twist in the legal battle over the historic Brite Ranch in Presidio County, former combative litigants wanting to retain their rights to keep or sell their division of the land have teamed up against an heir sibling who was seeking to sell the ranch in its entirety.

Jim White (along with his son Cuatro White and some of his other siblings), Mac White, and Geoffrey Connor (the adoptive son of Mac and the late sibling Beau White) have agreed to a settlement that calls for partitioning the land into four pieces, one of which would go to the sibling Hester Ann White, the others to Jim, Mac and Connor. A jury trial had been scheduled for October 21, with Hester Ann fighting the “in kind partition” and instead seeking a ruling that called for selling the ranch in one piece.

Jury summons had already gone out when yet another twist developed. Court records show a filing by Hester Ann on October 1 requesting to cancel the trial and noting her agreement in partitioning the land into four pieces.

The 65,000-acre ranch, once home to a famous and profitable Hereford herd created by pioneer Lucas Brite, is estimated to be worth at least \$60 million. The ranch and Brite’s family played a prominent role in county and Marfa life, with many in the family serving as elected officials since the late 1800s.

Eldest son Jim, who grew up on the ranch, assumed the role of overall trustee in the early 2000s, maintaining the land and in charge of distributing profits to his siblings. However, In 2018, Jim’s siblings — Mac, Beau and, in some filings, Hester Ann — filed a lawsuit claiming Jim was not fairly distributing revenue to them from their family trust and sought his removal as trustee. A trial in the summer of 2023 ended with a court order removing Jim as trustee

Continued on page 7

Pick your pumpkin at the Wagon Wheel Community Garden Harvest Party

By Gina Vera

MARFA — Volunteers at the Wagon Wheel Community Garden at 701 N. Kelly Street in Marfa are inviting everyone to enjoy the fruits of their labor and find the perfect pumpkin or gourd for their fall decorating at their Harvest Party on Saturday, October 31, from 10 a.m. to about 2 p.m. Costumes aren’t required but are encouraged, said sponsors.

Harvest Party goers can pick from a variety of 15 different pumpkins and gourds, browse a vendor market, fill up on food truck offerings, and enjoy live music, said Sarah Madero, who founded the community garden with Logan Smith and Robert Fly.

“We grew a variety of jack-o’-lanterns, and then we have an assortment of decorative pumpkins,” she said. “We’ll have them in big piles for people to come purchase, and the money will go to next year for the garden.” Pumpkin purchases will be cash or electronic pay applications only.

Guests can also pick from a variety of free flowers, shop at a fall market, grab a bite from food trucks, and enjoy live music.



Volunteers keep the community garden thriving.

The event celebrates the months of work done by around 40 volunteers. The work involved preparing the land, acquiring and planting the seeds, and ensuring they had the tons of fertilizer they needed to thrive.

“Pumpkins are heavy feeders, so

we got seven tons of compost from El Paso,” Madero said.

In Marfa, caring for a garden also means dealing with javelinas. Recently javelinas broke into the garden and destroyed some of the pumpkins, but Madero estimated that they still have more than 300

to choose from.

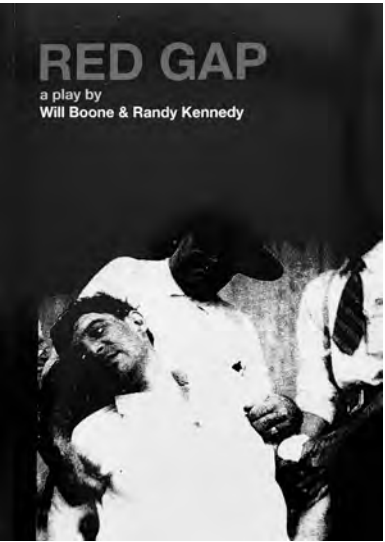
The Harvest Party is part of a larger vision of what the garden can be, Madero said. The hope, she said, is that the garden becomes a “third space” in the community. The phrase “third space” has come

Continued on page 2

INSIDE



The Beautiful Chloë
sprouts from the desert in Casa Piedra, Page 12



Chinati Weekend feature
play on a Santa bank
robber, page 11

The Big Bend Reporting Project



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Community garden sprung from empty lot



The Harvest Party will have plenty of pumpkins to pick from.

Harvest Party continued from Page 1

to mean a place other than home or work where people gather to engage with others. Madero added that the garden is also not a bar or a restaurant, but a space where people can gather outdoors.

Volunteers are welcome to participate at Wagon Wheel Garden Weed and Wine events, said Madero, who clarified that the weed in “Weed and Wine” refers to clearing weeds from the garden.

“We would throw these community gatherings called Weed and Wine. So, we would provide wine, and everyone would come out and help us weed. It’s kinda misleading,” Madero conceded. “I got comments from the older people in the community. They were like, ‘Is this legal?’ and I’m like, ‘Yes, it’s just weeding.’”

The land was first established as a garden area in 2001 by local artist Sandra Harper who intended to work with local schools to create learning experiences for children, according to Madero, but when the funding dried up, the project didn’t take root.

“It kinda sat there for a few years, and I started gardening for Meredith Dreiss, who owns the lot,” Madero said, adding that soon after she started working for Dreiss, she began thinking about what could be done with the land.

“I’ve always been curious, like, what could we do with that space?” she said. “I love to plant in bulk and just see everything grow and one day I asked Meredith, ‘Can we use your plot to grow pumpkins?’”

Dreiss was convinced when she saw the garden. “The next time she came to look at it, we already had full-grown pumpkins and sunflowers, and she was just blown away,”



Volunteers enjoy the fruits of labor.

of tears. It was pretty amazing. She’s been very supportive. We couldn’t have done it without her.” The garden could not have flourished without her fellow founders and the more than 40 volunteers who have put in work since June to plant and maintain it, Madero said.

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JUSTIN HAMEL/THE WACO BRIDGE/CATCHLIGHT LOCAL/

A Flock automatic license plate reader (ALPR) operated by Hewitt city government records vehicles that drive into Hewitt Park in Hewitt on Tuesday, July 28, 2026.

Texas city charges \$2M for Flock records

Ayden Runnels,
The Texas Tribune

In the Fort Worth-area suburb of North Richland Hills, getting answers about how police use their Flock Safety cameras could cost \$2.3 million.

Or at least, that’s how much the city is charging a Flock watchdog — requiring it all be paid up-front — after he filed a public records request for information about the city’s AI-powered cameras. The invoice said it was accounting for labor costs of \$15 an hour — equivalent to more than 14 years of work — to search about a terabyte worth of communications about errors, misuse and effectiveness of the Flock system. The North Richland Hills price tag is just the latest example of how local and state governments have increasingly made it more difficult to access information about Flock cameras as scrutiny over the surveillance system has intensified in recent months.

Phil Mynona filed the records request in late August on behalf of his anti-surveillance group called the Texas Privacy Coalition.

He’s filed nearly identical public record requests to almost 200 law enforcement agencies seeking to understand how they use the devices.

Mynona is a pseudonym he has often used to speak publicly about Flock, because he said his job in the technology industry would be put at risk because of his advocacy.

He has received troves of information from agencies, some at no cost and others with varying price tags for labor costs. Recently he said the city of Sealy, west of Houston, handed over more than 400,000 pages of documents for free.

The multimillion dollar invoice from North Richland Hills struck him as “ludicrous” and a way of stifling his search for records.

“This is a crazy outlier, I think the highest that we received in some amount was [\$5,000] from Victoria, Texas, and at the time, I thought that was ridiculous,” he said.

A North Richland Hills city spokesperson confirmed the public records invoice to The Texas Tribune but referred questions about their Flock camera use to a city website with information about the cameras.

Mynona has since narrowed the request for information, but the city did not respond when asked whether that would lower the cost. A Monday night social media post from the police department, however, said the modified request’s cost is “expected to be significantly less.”

The city’s post said the \$2.3 million cost estimate was “understandably shocking,” but was calculated based on the amount of communications legally required to be reviewed within the almost terabyte worth of data. North Richland Hills Police Chief Jeff Garner said in a statement included in the post that the city’s use of Flock cameras reflected the “community’s expectations.”

“As far as this latest record request, we always strive for trans-

parency,” Garner said. “Our use of [license plate readers] adheres to these community principles and honors our commitment to pursue justice for victims of crime.”

The Tribune has a similar pending request for records to the city.

Flock cameras collect license plate numbers as well as other identifying information, including make, model, bumper stickers and dents, and officers can search thousands of cameras owned by hundreds of police agencies in a single query.

Flock Safety, the Atlanta-based company, releases few details about its cameras, leaving disclosure and transparency decisions to be decided by the patchwork of both state and local governments.

Camera locations, the amount of data retained and how often police are searching for vehicles are unknown in most cities across Texas unless departments explicitly share them, placing even more importance on receiving public records.

Anti-surveillance groups have underscored the need for transparency surrounding the use of the devices, as information unearthed in public records requests has spurred investigations, arrests and prompted departments to change policies or conduct their first audits.

That includes the case involving Lufkin Police, where an officer on Wednesday was sentenced to 5 years in prison after pleading guilty to 100 felony counts of abusing official information after he used Flock cameras to stalk several people.

It was a public records request from USA Today that prompted both the investigation and an audit of the entire Lufkin Police Department — which flagged a second officer for potential misuse, according to records from the Department of Public Safety.

Gov. Greg Abbott has pointed to that case as part of the reason for a “crackdown” on Flock cameras, which he joined in by blocking state funding and pausing certain installations for the surveillance cameras in August and September.

Meanwhile, information provided for free by some law enforcement agencies has been held behind invoices costing thousands by others, while some agencies have denied requests to review data on camera locations and searches on the camera network.

Houston news station KPRC was quoted \$121,000 for Flock records, despite the news agency receiving thousands of pages’ worth of similar records from smaller police departments at no cost, it reported.

Conservative online Texas news site *Current Revolt* reported the city of Irving is charging \$70,000 for records that the city of Carrollton provided for free.

In some cases, records provided publicly earlier this year by agencies have become more elusive.

In response to a public records request for Flock audit data, DPS in July gave the Tribune a complete list of the department’s searches and thousands of other agencies using the agency’s Flock network, with officer and license plate numbers redacted.

But when the Tribune made an identical request for the next few weeks of data in early August, DPS only provided records of its own searches and not that of outside agencies.

When asked for a third set of search data shortly after, DPS withheld the records completely and challenged the request, asking the Attorney General’s Office to allow it to withhold the entirety of the search data it previously provided.

DPS did not respond to a request for comment about the change in their response.

The agency operates more than 900 of the estimated 13,000 Flock cameras statewide across state roads and along the state’s border.

DPS recently reined in how many agencies are allowed to access its extensive network after a Tribune review of its audit data revealed that 2,800 agencies, most of them outside of Texas, were accessing its cameras every four seconds without required agreements with DPS.

The Texas Department of Transportation, which is required to approve permits for license plate readers placed along state roads and highways, declined a request to share the number of permits it approved and the locations of approved cameras.

In a challenge sent to the Attorney General’s Office, TxDOT cited public safety concerns.

DPS and Texas’ Department of Criminal Justice have also challenged record requests that would identify camera locations across Texas.

Some city departments, however, are more forthcoming about where their cameras are placed. Police in the city of Live Oak, northeast of San Antonio, provide an interactive map of their Flock camera locations, and Corinth in North Texas lists the street locations of all of their cameras online.

Flock provides agencies with their own avenues to be more transparent with how they use the devices, but whether departments use the features and how is up to them.

Agencies’ audit data of searches is exportable through the click of a few buttons on Flock’s platform. The company also provides agencies with the option to host transparency portals that show how many cameras departments have, how many searches they conduct, how many vehicles are scanned and even allow search data to be directly downloaded from the site.

“The portals give agencies a public-facing way to publish information about their [license plate reader] programs, including policies, usage and access rules to help communities better understand how the technology is being used,” Flock spokesperson Andrew Smith said in a statement.

Out of the hundreds of agencies that use Flock cameras in Texas, only 60 make use of the transparency portals, the Tribune found, representing more than 2,600 of the estimated 13,000 cameras operating in the state. Of those, only 16 share their search records.

This article first appeared on *The Texas Tribune* at [texastribune.org](https://www.texastribune.org).

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PUBLIC NOTICE

FY 2027 Regional Solid Waste Grant Program
RIO GRANDE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Notice to Private Industry Providing Recycling or Solid Waste Services

September 8, 2026: This notice is issued by Rio Grande Council of Governments to advise private industries providing recycling or solid waste services within the Rio Grande Council of Governments region that applications are being accepted from local governments for grant funding for recycling and other solid waste management projects within the region. These funds are provided through a grant from the TCEQ, under the authority of Section 361.014, Texas Health & Safety Code.

In accordance with the statutory provisions, a project or service funded under this program must promote cooperation between public and private entities and may not be otherwise readily available or create a competitive advantage over a private industry that provides recycling or solid waste services.

In order to comply with these requirements, applicants with projects that will provide recycling or other solid waste services are asked to notify private industries providing similar services within the geographic service area of the project, to ensure that any questions about the proposed project can be addressed early in the application process. Note that this notification process is not required for projects where a recycling or solid waste service will not be provided. If a local government contacts you about a proposed project, we recommend that you respond as soon as possible with any concerns you may have about the project.

TABC Notice
Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Wine and Malt Beverage Retailer's Permit (BG) by Desert Heaven LLC dba Desert Heaven LLC, to be located at 1004 Foothill Blvd, Presidio, Presidio County, Texas Officers of said corporation Owner are Ivan Muniz, Owner. In addition to this coordination process by the local governments, the applications will be available for public review during the time period and at the location listed below.

Review Dates and Times: October 22, 2026, at 10 a.m. MDT
Physical Location: City of El Paso Environmental Service Department (Cotton Patch Training Room) located at 7968 San Paulo Dr. El Paso, Texas 79907

If you have any concerns about a proposed project, as it relates to compliance with the statutory provisions, you may submit written comments to the address below by October 11, 2026. If you submit comments, you will be notified of the date and time when the projects will be reviewed by our Solid Waste Advisory Committee and will be afforded the opportunity to discuss your concerns with the Committee.

*Mailing Address: 8037 Lockheed, Ste. 100 Fax Number: 915-532-9385
Email Address: Marisaq@riocog.org*

The Committee recommendations will be provided to our Rio Grande Council of Governments Board of Directors on November 6, 2026, which will make the final project selection decisions. Per the procedures established by the TCEQ, if a private industry submits comments opposing a project based on the statutory provisions, and the project is selected for funding, that private industry may then appeal the project selection to the TCEQ.

For further information about this process, and for the dates and times when the applications will be considered, please contact Marisa Quintanilla, Regional Services Director at 915-533-0998 x 119.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Far West Texas Water Planning Group – Region E

Pre-Planning Meeting for the Development of the 2031 Regional Water Plan

Notice is hereby given that Far West Texas Water Planning Group – Region E will hold a pre-planning meeting seeking public input and comments on issues that should be addressed or provisions that should be included in the 2031 Region E Regional Water Plan and the 2032 State Water Plan. Discussion will also be held

to consider the potential process for conducting interregional coordination regarding water management strategies for the seventh cycle of regional water planning.

The Far West Texas Water Planning Group – Region E includes the following Texas Counties: Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Presidio.

The Pre-Planning Public Meeting will be held at 12:00 p.m. MST on Thursday, November 5, 2026, followed by the Region E Planning Group Meeting on Thursday, November 5, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. MST, at the Rio Grande Council of Governments, 8037 Lockheed DR., Suite 100, El Paso, Texas 79925. Written comments will be accepted from October 1, 2026, through November 5, 2026, and can be mailed to Ms. Annette Gutierrez, Executive Director, Rio Grande Council of Governments, 8037 Lockheed DR., Suite 100, El Paso, Texas 79925 or emailed to annetteg@riocog.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information or to be notified of future Planning Group meetings, please contact Region E Planning Group Sponsor, Annette Gutierrez, at: 915-533-4688, annetteg@riocog.org, or Rio Grande Council of Governments: Region E Regional Water Planning Group Sponsor, 8037 Lockheed, Suite 100, El Paso, Texas, 79925. If you wish to provide written comments prior to the meeting, please email your comments to annetteg@riocog.org and include “Region E Water Planning Group Meeting” in the subject line of the email.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning and Zoning Commission of the City of Marfa, Texas will hold a public hearing on October 20, 2026, at 6pm in the Casner Room at City Hall, 113 S Highland Ave.

The request concerns a property of .4 acres of land, situated at 105 W Lincoln St. (ID 10417), also described as All of Lots Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7) and the West 15.0 feet (W. 15’) of Lot Four (4), Block Nine (9), Original Townsite of Marfa, located in Presidio County, Texas, and 119 W Lincoln St. (ID 10418), also described as All of Lots Eight (8), Nine (9), and the East 12.5 feet (E. 12.5’) of Lot Ten (10), Block Nine (9), Original Townsite of Marfa, located in Presidio County, Texas.

The applicant, Quarter Circle A, LLC / The Lincoln Hotel, is requesting a change in zoning from (M) Multiple Family Residential to (C-2) General Commercial for the purpose of additional business opportunities such as a gift shop or café.

Following the Commission’s recommendation, the City Council of the City of Marfa will hold a subsequent public hearing to take final action on the proposed zoning change.

All interested persons are invited to attend and be heard. Written comments may be submitted to Stephen.rabourn@gmail.com prior to the hearing. Additional notices and agendas will be posted on the City of Marfa’s website at cityofmarfa.com.

TABC Notice
Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Wine and Malt Beverage Retailer's Permit (BG) by Desert Heaven LLC dba Desert Heaven LLC, to be located at 1004 Foothill Blvd, Presidio, Presidio County, Texas Officers of said corporation Owner are Ivan Muniz, Owner.

HELP WANTED

Marfa Parks Board Treasurer
Municipality: Marfa Parks and Recreation Development Corporation, Marfa, Texas

Classification: Part-Time
Salary Range: Competitive / Dependent on Qualifications (DOQ)
Closing Date: November 15, 2026

Position Summary

The Board is seeking a qualified person to serve as its next Treasurer. The Treasurer is responsible for stewarding the organization’s resources, and ensures records are maintained, reviews and prepares financial reports for the Board, and

interacts with accountants and auditors to help keep the Board informed of financial matters.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Understanding of financial accounting for nonprofit organizations
Knowledge of financial reports and the organization’s record-keeping and accounting systems (Quickbooks)

Ability and willingness to work with the Board and auditors as necessary

Ability to attend every Board Meeting (Third Thursday of every month)

Ability to receive training from the previous Treasurer in the months of November and December.

Minimum Qualifications

Education: Bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university.

Experience: Experience preferred but not required.

How to Apply: Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest to: Michael Camacho, Marfa Parks Board PresidentEmail: michael.camachito@gmail.com

Mailing Address: Marfa Parks Board, PO Box 386 Marfa, Texas, 79843

The Marfa Parks and Recreation Development Corporation is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Job Opening:
Executive Director
Food Pantry of Jeff Davis County

The Food Pantry is Seeking a community-minded leader with nonprofit or related management experience to oversee programs, staff, volunteers, and daily operations.

Details: www.foodpantry-jdc.org/jobs.html

Apply: jobs@foodpantry-jdc.org

Resume + brief letter of interest
Deadline: October 15, 2026

The Food Pantry of Jeff Davis County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Obituary: Mary Lou Escobedo

Funeral Mass for Mary Lou Escobedo, age 86 of Seminole, Texas, was celebrated Monday, October 5, 2026, at 11 a.m. at St. James Catholic Church with Father Eduardo Teo officiating. Burial followed at Gaines County Cemetery.

Rosary was held at St. James Catholic Church Sunday, October 4, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. All services were under the direction of Boyer Funeral Home.

Mary Lou Escobedo was born on April 4, 1940, to Louisa (Aguirre) and Carlos Valverde. She

married the love of her life, Caterino Escobedo, on July 22, 1957, in Ft. Davis, Texas. She was a member of St. James Catholic Church and a member of the Altar Society. Mary Lou attended Blackwell School in Marfa, Texas. She worked for Seminole ISD for 32 years and was a Pink Lady for Seminole Memorial Hospital.

She loved traveling as well as shopping with her daughter; she also loved taking pictures of family, scrapbooking, baking, and attending her grandchildren’s sporting events.



HELP WANTED:
DESIGNER

The Big Bend Sentinel is looking for a freelance designer. The Designer lays out the paper every week and owns the Sentinel's visual identity across print, social, and advertising materials. The designer will also be involved in creating merchandise.

About the Sentinel

The Big Bend Sentinel is a non-profit weekly newspaper serving Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis Counties in far west Texas. We cover local government, schools, public safety, culture and community life, in print every week and online. Our newsroom operates independently of the readers, donors, foundations and advertisers who support it.

What You'll Do

- Lay out the print edition every week, on deadline.
- Design social media content.
- Design ads for print and online, as needed.
- Maintain the Sentinel's brand and design style.
- Design merchandise for regional and online sales.
- Design impact reports and collateral for events and fundraising, as needed

Requirements

- Experience with newspaper or

publication layout on a weekly deadline.

- Proficiency in standard layout and design software.
- A portfolio covering print layout, ad design and brand work.
- Functioning laptop and ability to work on deadline
- What we're looking for
- Strong portfolio with experience both print and digital products
- A familiarity with social media
- Previous experience with media outlets a plus

Application Process

This is a part-time role. Send a short note on why you want to join The Big Bend Sentinel, a copy or link to your portfolio, a resume, and your contact information.

The Big Bend Sentinel is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applicants of every background and encourage people from the communities we cover to apply.

CLASSIFIEDS

Home for Sale

Historic Alpine Home, 606 West Sul Ross. 2 Bedroom, 1 Bath, Cellar , Garage and fenced yard. \$195,000. Text 210-218-9933 for pictures and details.

Rental Wanted:
December–May

I’m seeking an apartment, casa, or similar rental.

CROSSWORD

Edited by David Steinberg October 8, 2026

ACROSS

- 1 What a mathematician or detective seeks
- 6 It can be found on Safari!
- 9 “Frozen” queen
- 13 Two-gender pronoun
- 14 Hindi for “tea”
- 15 Attaches the binding to a quilt, say
- 16 Warren Buffett’s Nebraska hometown
- 17 Foamy drinks made with plant-based milk
- 19 “So there!”
- 21 Alpaca relative
- 22 Australian gem
- 23 No more than
- 25 Type “typo” rather than “type,” e.g.
- 27 Oscar winner Brie
- 29 Wilson of the WNBA
- 30 Certain songbird
- 32 It’s not working!
- 35 Touch on the shoulder
- 36 Causes of icy postgame interviews?
- 39 Like Adam (age redacted), but not Zachary (age 17)
- 40 Idle of Monty Python

- 41 Agenda entries
- 42 Don’t squander
- 43 In a ____ of speaking
- 45 Soccer coach Guardiola
- 46 Park, e.g., in Manhattan
- 48 They may bruise when they clash
- 52 Indian wedding dye
- 54 “See you then!”
- 56 Warning to stay in one’s lane
- 58 Line between two cities in Ticket to Ride
- 59 Result of beehiving yourself?
- 60 Mid
- 61 Red emotion in “Inside Out”
- 62 Piece of office furniture
- 63 Flat fish
- 64 Ales and lagers

DOWN

- 1 Snapchat story part
- 2 Change, as keyboard assignments
- 3 Tennis player Naomi
- 4 “Absolutely not!”
- 5 Guinness entry, say
- 6 Exasperated cry to a relentless arguer
- 7 Have some kolacky or doughnuts

- 8 Banknotes
- 9 Is, in Ibiza
- 10 “I wanna fight those guys!”
- 11 They benefit from curses!
- 12 Really bad, in slang
- 14 Nail polish layers
- 18 Dump account, perhaps
- 20 Response to a groan-worthy dad joke
- 24 White Monopoly 8-Down
- 26 Many songs on the 2026 Drake album
- 28 Lot measure
- 30 Unrealistic expectation
- 31 “Could be yes, could be no”
- 33 Radiates
- 34 NPR bag
- 36 Ascend
- 37 Coin with a 2026 “Liberty Over Tyranny” version
- 38 “This relationship is SO over!”
- 44 A little loco
- 46 Insect in a hill
- 47 What e-cigs don’t produce, technically
- 49 Dashboard device
- 50 Playful water mammal
- 51 Futures experts?
- 53 Cozy place to solve crosswords
- 55 Omani, typically
- 56 Palindromic flop
- 57 Lucius Best, ____ Frozone

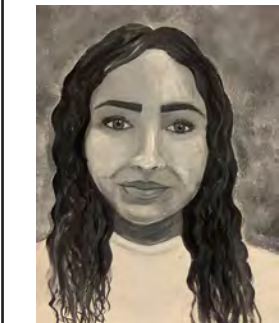
PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Giselle Torres
12 grade, Marfa ISD,
black and white acrylic

South Texas is moving on from Trump

By Gaige Davila
Texas Observer

Ten years after Donald Trump was first elected President, the Republican Party has placed its chips on a region that would have made little sense at any other time in the last century: South Texas. Yet, if current polling holds, the GOP may have already overplayed its hand.

Congressional districts from San Antonio down to Brownsville, aggressively (and perhaps foolishly) redrawn at Trump’s orders, are at the crux of any Republican midterm hopes to hold the U.S. House, and state legislative races are similarly key to the party keeping its comfortable supermajority in Texas’ lower chamber. Up to the top of the ballot, where South Texas voters were key to James Talarico’s primary victory and where Brownsville-raised Gina Hinojosa sits one rung down, the region may hold the car keys. All as Republicans run without the man who seemed to break Democrats’ hold in the area on the ticket.

With weeks left to go, proclamations of another “red wave” coming to the region—after Trump flipped the majority-Latino South Texas border in 2024 and the GOP seized a state Senate seat while holding onto a congressional and state House district snagged two years before—are no more. Instead, national GOP leadership, like House Speaker Mike Johnson, is anxiously coming to stump for South Texas’ GOP candidates, working to convince voters that the stakes are high for the Republican Party this year.

“[Democrats] want to remove the president, okay. They want one, unicameral body, the House, to run everything. You have to ask yourself why,” Johnson told a couple dozen people in Sinton in August at The Butter Churn, where he was campaigning for Monica De La Cruz, who since 2022 has represented Congressional District 15, which sprawls from near San Antonio down to the Rio Grande. “Because they have calculated that, over the next couple of cycles, they can elect enough Marxist communists to take over the whole thing.”

The national GOP has opened a “battle station” in Harlingen, near Brownsville in the Rio Grande Valley, much like they did in McAllen years prior, hoping to hold the electoral gains it made in the four-county, 1.4-million-person southern tip of the region. That hold looks increasingly tenuous as the popular Tejano singer Bobby Pulido has turned De La Cruz’s CD-15 into a toss-up, per the Cook Political Report, and incumbents Vicente Gonzalez and Henry Cuellar look increasingly likely to keep their districts, the 34th and 28th, that were re-gerrymandered for GOP pickup.

The prognosis is perhaps unsurprising in retrospect, since there were always signs the 2024 South Texas swing could have been peculiar to that specific presidential context. Downballot Democrats largely survived the Trump wave. And all that was before, of course, South Texas became ground zero for the harsh realities of Trump’s mass deportation project.

South Texas GOP candidates are appearing to now distance themselves from Trump and his policies—after ICE has arrested tens of thousands of people in the agency’s Harlingen and San Antonio sectors, where most of these races are located; after the cost of living has continued to increase in these metro areas; and after sometimes-trillionaire Elon Musk’s company town and its proliferation outside of Brownsville has drawn more ire from surrounding communities with each rocket launch. Democrats are capitalizing on the frustration, with the party’s confidence resurging.

Dems are coalescing around messaging that also seems to be resonating statewide, such as the platform of Austin state Representative Gina Hinojosa, the gubernatorial hopeful whose roots are in the Valley. This includes lowering the cost of living, holding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) accountable after repeated violence, and getting billionaires out of politics.

Red scare efforts aside, South Texas’ GOP candidates for Congress and the state Legislature are actually running on similar platforms to Democrats on some issues, vying for the same kind of support that has kept the region—up until recently—a stronghold for moderate Democrats. Republican legislator Janie Lopez, who won her San Benito-based state House seat in 2022, is campaigning on fixing roads and flood infrastructure. One

of De La Cruz’s TV ads talks about lowering costs for people working in restaurants. Eric Flores, a former federal prosecutor under the Biden administration who’s challenging Gonzalez, has made water one of his campaign focuses. Nary a “mass deportations” sign in sight.

Two years prior, it seemed everyone running in South Texas races had a border security ad, even Michelle Vallejo, a progressive who was then running in a losing bid against De La Cruz.

Now, De La Cruz herself has advocated for and helped release some people from ICE detention. But it may be too late to create distance from ICE, Trump, and the cost of living, experts told the Texas Observer.

“We’ve seen a sea change, in just two years: a sea change in Latino voting from what we saw in ’24, where we saw a substantial number of Latinos vote for Trump, vote for Republicans,” Jon Taylor, the University of Texas San Antonio’s political science department chair, told the Observer. “And now, if you look at polling, consistently now you’re seeing a complete flip in the other direction toward Democrats.”

This loss of support isn’t limited to Latino voters in South Texas, but—as both the site of 2024’s perhaps most surprising pro-Trump swing and many of the president’s most harmful policies in practice—South Texas may serve as the definitive referendum on the White House occupant this November.

“I have to say, it doesn’t feel like 2018 quite for me,” Vicente Gonzalez, the incumbent Democratic congressman for CD-34, which runs from Brownsville to Corpus Christi, told the Observer in a September phone call. “I wasn’t working near as hard as I am right now in 2018, I’ll tell you that.”

Having been redrawn last summer into a district that went for Trump in 2024 by 10 points, Gonzalez says Democrats can’t take another election for granted in South Texas. But Democratic turnout during the primaries this March has Gonzalez hopeful.

That’s partly because Gonzalez has already managed to survive a decade’s worth of election cycles, in the 34th and in the neighboring 15th, which he vacated voluntarily and is now held by De La Cruz.

Back in 2022, the self-described “triple threat” of De La Cruz plus Mayra Flores and Cassy Garcia all of whom were Rio Grande Valley-based, right-wing Latinas vying for seats with districts that stretched as far as San Antonio and its suburbs, garnered much media attention. South Texas’ Latino voters were simultaneously being invested in by the Republican party and disinvested in by Democrats, or so the narrative went.

But the Blue Dog Dem congressmen, Gonzalez and Henry Cuellar—whose Laredo-based 28th stretches down into the Valley—held Flores and Garcia at bay. Cuellar then rebuffed (criminal pardon-related) speculation that he might change parties late last year, setting up the two men, often derided by liberals within their own party in the past, as the resilient paragons of the South Texas Democrat style.

Eric Flores, Gonzalez’s opponent, prevailed in the March GOP primary thanks to Trump’s backing and recently got a stump speech from Vice President JD Vance in Harlingen. Earlier this year, Trump visited a Corpus Christi Whataburger with Flores in tow. The president has twice posted a video on his social media channels calling for people to vote for Flores. He’s done similar for De La Cruz.

But, following the primaries, Flores’ campaign signs don’t say he’s endorsed by Trump anymore. He also recoiled when a local Democratic Party made campaign signs that looked like Flores’ older signs, saying the National Guard Army veteran was “Trump Endorsed” and supported ICE. In a statement on social media, Flores used the term “dirty tricks” to describe the signs that tied him to the president who likely secured his congressional nomination for him and to the federal agency that’s carrying out the same president’s signature policy promise.

A survey from Texas Southern University’s policy research arm says the race is now in Gonzalez’s favor. Mark P. Jones, one of the authors of the survey report and a professor of political science at Rice University, said the GOP, when they redrew districts in 2025, depended on a voting bloc to turn out that likely won’t this election: young,



Campaign signs for the CD 34 Race

Latino men who voted for Trump.

“It’s not that many of them have decided to become Democrats, although some will vote Democratic,” Jones told the Observer, describing some of the survey respondents. “They are disillusioned by Trump and are not motivated to turn out to vote for anyone this year.”

Redistricting is also a factor in De La Cruz’s reelection chances. The new CD-15 map, though shifted just slightly east, removed about 60 percent of De La Cruz’s previous constituents, meaning she had to introduce herself to voters while her opponent, Bobby Pulido, is one of the most successful Tejano artists of all time. In South Texas, his name recognition is undeniable, and policy-wise he’s running in the established mold of Gonzalez and Cuellar. Which means De La Cruz, arguably, does not have the incumbent advantage, despite two terms in Congress.

“You add that with he had a profile of someone who you can’t easily portray as left, as a coastal elite, or a coastal liberal, and that he’s from the Valley,” Jones said. “But [he] also has, historically, had a set of positions and has a profile of somebody who’s a traditional South Texas centrist.”

Democrats are largely eschewing progressivism this cycle, after the failed congressional bids in recent cycles of Vallejo and Jessica Cisneros, who nearly ousted Cuellar in two Dem primaries. With one exception: the Bernie Sanders-backed Julio Salinas, who won the Democratic primary for the McAllen-based House District 41 against former city council member and moderate Democrat Seby Haddad.

“South Texas voters are, in their heart of hearts, centrist Democrats. The majority are,” Jones said of the region’s electorate going from blue to red and possibly back to blue. “That’s the dominant political organization in South Texas. ... They also are not going to vote for extreme Republican candidates if they’re given a palatable Democratic alternative.”

As for whether the Blue Dogs are truly back in town, Gonzalez said it will take some time to know for sure. Trump is omnipresent in the GOP’s South Texas races, having endorsed all the current Republican congressional and legislative candidates and made a handful of appearances in the area, but this remains a midterm race. Time will tell if, one way or another, a 2024-like effect can be achieved in 2028.

“I think it’s going to take another couple of election cycles to really say there is a trend one way or another,” Gonzalez said. “I always said Donald Trump brings a different type of excitement to an election.”

Eric Flores’ campaign did not respond to the Observer’s request for an interview.

In mid-September, at an event center on the southwestern edge of Brownsville, Gina Hinojosa was welcomed by hundreds of people, as Selena’s “Como Me Duele” reverberated from several loudspeakers through a space that hosts many of the city’s quinceañeras.

It was as “South Texas” of a homecoming as Hinojosa could have. She’s represented central Austin in the Texas Legislature since 2017 but

was raised in Brownsville, making the Rio Grande Valley a recurring campaign stop since she announced her candidacy in her hometown eleven months prior. With less than two months left before the election, Hinojosa blamed the state’s health-care, public school, and electricity woes on Greg Abbott, his donors, and tech billionaires.

“What people have finally figured out is, as we’ve been in our partisan tribes for the last 10 years, fighting each other with the culture wars over Thanksgiving dinner, fighting with our families about culture wars, the only people winning those wars are the billionaires,” Hinojosa said. “Like, 15 billionaire tech dudes who just have massive money and massive power and all of our data, and are about to blow up this planet ... if we don’t come together fast to save ourselves—that’s what this election is about. Who does Texas belong to?”

Though she didn’t mention issues particular to the Valley in her speech, she did tell the Observer afterward that ICE was not the kind of border security she supported. That morning, she had visited homes under construction with the South Texas Builders Association, a group with a president that has become particularly outspoken about ICE detaining people on job sites and about regretting his prior support of Trump.

A few days before her visit to Brownsville, two ICE agents pulled a teenager out of a car at an Alamo intersection, punched his face several times, then put him in handcuffs.

“These ICE raids are not making us more safe. They’re making us less safe,” she said. “I support border security here at the border. We want secure communities, right? But that’s making us less safe, not more safe.”

Nearly everyone who came to the

rally lined up to take photos with Hinojosa, as Cameron County’s senior Democratic players talked among themselves, leaning against the stage. Former classmates of Hinojosa brought yearbooks to sign, supporters their campaign signs, and one person an infant child.

Zoe Griffith, a first-time voter from Brownsville who has organized with Healthy Futures of Texas, attended the rally with her mother, Christine Ramos, a local high school teacher and Marine veteran. Griffith said that Hinojosa’s positions against data centers and egregious ICE arrests are why she’ll be voting for her.

“Having seen Greg Abbott and how he runs in Texas, I want to see better change from my generation, and especially the generations that come before me,” she told the Observer. “Having people like Gina, especially as a female role model, it brings me more hope.”

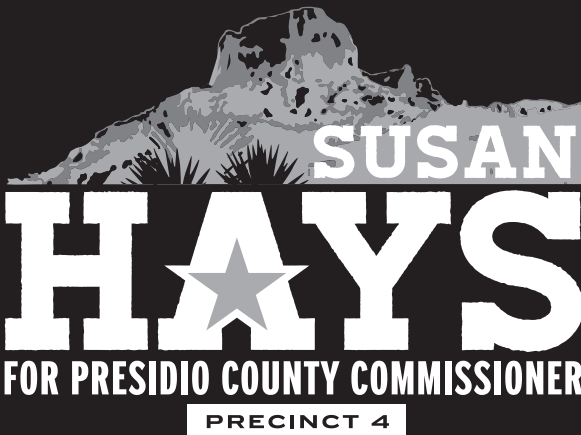
AS AN ATTORNEY, for more than 30 years now, I’ve drafted bills that became law and challenged laws that never should have passed. And today, I’m running for County Commissioner because I believe we can create economic development that doesn’t sell out and destroy what makes our home beautiful.

I’ve been proud to volunteer for No Big Bend Wall’s legal and governmental relations committees, working with the talented people of the Big Bend who share one thing in common: *we bend the knee to no one.*

That’s me in a nutshell: a bit rebellious but always collaborative, eager to solve problems and do it with integrity. It would be an honor to serve you.

Experience came with age. My fighting spirit comes naturally.





SUSAN HAYS
FOR PRESIDIO COUNTY COMMISSIONER
PRECINCT 4

WHERE & WHEN TO VOTE:

- ★ **MARFA VISITOR’S CENTER**
302 S. HIGHLAND AVE.
- ★ **FRI. OCT. 23**
LAST DAY FOR THE ELECTIONS
OFFICE TO
RECEIVE AN APPLICATION TO
VOTE BY MAIL
(SEND IT SOONER TO GIVE TIME FOR MAILING!)
- ★ **MON. OCT. 19 - FRI. OCT 30**
EARLY VOTING
- ★ **TUES. NOV. 3**
ELECTION DAY

Pol. Adv. paid for by the Susan Hays Campaign

Artists incorporate wall into their work

Wall art, continued from Page 1

and joy of life in Far West Texas, rather than sadness or existential dread. “A lot of us feel pressure to record [the construction] in the ways we know how,” she explained. “You’re an artist, but you carry this responsibility to share what’s happening through different lenses, because you never know who you can connect with.”

Pratt was not the only regional artist to depict heavy machinery in their work for the first time after the bulldozers descended on Big Bend National Park. Colleen O’Brien has spent the past few years building an archive of abstract landscape paintings that use natural pigments and textures to record the region’s rivers and canyonlands. To make these large-scale pieces, she hikes or drives in materials to paint en plein air, lending the work an air of literal West Texas grit and authenticity.

When word got out that ground had been broken on Mariscal Mountain, a remote corner of the park that forms the distinctive “big bend” in the Rio Grande, O’Brien and a friend drove out in the middle of the night to document it. O’Brien followed the outline of the new patrol road and laid a canvas down to capture the tire tread of an excavator through a process that felt like making a grave rubbing of a place she loves dearly. “To feel the excavator marks with your own body — I was checking in and out, trying to be present with this devastating thing that was happening,” she said.

O’Brien was an artist in residence in the National Park in 2024, which prompted her to develop a “leave-no-trace” friendly version of her artistic practice.

She was prohibited from using materials from the park in her artwork, so she would carefully document the type of soil, rocks and plants in the area she wanted to depict and then find analogous materials on a friend’s property just outside the park to use for the final work. She thought about the irony of the whole situation as she laid on the mountain, carefully complying with the park’s rules after the government waived dozens of environmental regulations to allow private contractors to work as quickly as possible. “I brought my own natural pigments in, I didn’t use soil from the site, and here it is to record something that’s the most egregious violation of ‘leave no trace,’” she said. “I think that’s so insane.”

The three women will be showing artwork at Marfa’s Club Nowhere during Chinati Weekend, alongside a number of fellow local artists, including Liz Potter of Alpine, who will be showing photography. Potter’s work is typically a solo practice — she likes camping in the furthest reaches of the Big Bend parks, and taking medium-format photos of landscapes with old-school camera gear.

For most of her tenure out in the Big Bend, the only human figure that would appear in Potter’s work was herself. But she’s shifted to documenting the community’s response to the wall, photographing protests and rallies as the issue winds its way through the court system and local county governments. “Since moving out here in early 2018, my work has really become about celebrating this region and showing the beauty of the desert that was so transformative in my life,” she said. “Now I’m trying to protect it — [my practice] went from sharing the beauty to sharing to get people to

help us protect it.”

The show at Club Nowhere, which will open with a reception on Friday October 9 from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., will not be the only Chinati Weekend programming dedicated to artistic explorations of the border wall. On Monday, Yolanda Alvarado of No Big Bend Wall announced the opening of La Frontera, a show exploring the wall through multimedia work by photographers and journalists Brian Finke, Natalie Newman, Jordan Vondehaar, Hannah Gentiles, and Hillary Pierce. La Frontera will open in the studios across from the Sentinel café the same night as the Club Nowhere show, starting at 7 p.m.

The Border Wall will be on display through Chinati Weekend and beyond at Club Nowhere, 401 South Highland Avenue in Marfa. La Frontera will show at Studio #6, located at 208 West El Paso Street in Marfa. O’Brien will be showing works as an individual at Do Right Hall (110 W Dallas Street) through the weekend, with an opening also on Friday 5-8 p.m.



A detail from Mother of the Desert II by Yosdy Valdivia



Colleen O’Brien works on her painting of the excavator track through sunrise.



Pra(e)y, by Keirstin Pratt.

Texas hospitals could lose \$27 million daily

By Gary Borders

With the state’s new fiscal year beginning on September 1, Texas hospitals are expected to lose \$27 million per day in additional Medicaid funding, according to the Texas Standard. The shortfall follows the Trump administration’s withholding of approval for about \$9.8 billion in three programs under the Comprehensive Hospital Increase Reimbursement Program (CHIRP).

The program provides additional funding to cover the gap between Medicaid reimbursement rates and the actual costs hospitals incur when providing health services to Medicaid patients. Four million low-income Texans, most of them children, are enrolled in Medicaid.

“It is impossible for a hospital to take a huge loss on a Medicaid side of their portfolio and not have that impact services across the board, regardless of what type of insurance a patient has,” said Sara González of the Texas Hospital Association.

The federal government is withholding these funds as it questions how local jurisdictions in Texas calculate the taxes they collect from hospitals. Under CHIRP, the federal government matches those funds so that the hospitals can cover their actual Medicaid costs.

Gov. Greg Abbott has called the funding holdup an economic “gun to the head.”

More than a dozen school districts face state takeover in 2027

More than a dozen Texas school districts could be taken over by the state next year if they do not improve student performance before next year’s A-F accountability ratings, according to The Texas Tribune. At least 14 districts had at least one school campus with a failing grade, according to this year’s preliminary ratings. Under state law, the Texas education commissioner must take over any district that receives five consecutive failing ratings — or close that failing school.

After a takeover, the district’s elected board of trustees is replaced with an appointed board of managers for at least two years.

Campuses under threat of closure next year are in the following districts: Clarksville, Cleveland, Coldspring-Oakhurst, Elgin, Judson, Kingsville, Manor, Nacogdoches, Poteet, Runge, San Angelo, San Antonio, Spring and Waco.

Districts have until September 11 to appeal a school’s grade rating.

New laws took effect in Texas on Sept. 1

A bevy of new laws took effect September 1, according to the Standard, including changes to how consumers can repair electronic devices, greater regulation of residential solar sales and the allowance of certain forms of gold and silver as legal tender.

House Bill 2963 requires electronics manufacturers to provide owners and independent repair businesses

with the parts, tools, and documentation they need on “fair and reasonable terms.” That requirement applies to consumer electronics with a wholesale price of at least \$50, but only to items offered for sale in the state after September 1.

The measure contains numerous exemptions, including many motor vehicles, farm equipment, large home appliances and video-game consoles.

Another legal change requires residential solar system salespeople to register with the state and to work for a registered solar retailer. Consumer advocates said complaints about solar panels submitted to the attorney general increased by 818% between 2018 and 2023.

Another law recognizes qualifying privately produced silver and gold as legal tender in the state. The state comptroller is responsible for approving a system allowing electronic payments backed by bullion.

Lawmakers looking to further cut school property taxes

A Senate analysis indicates that nearly 40% of Texas homeowners pay no school property taxes. Some legislators hope to increase that share in the upcoming regular session, which begins in January. The Houston Chronicle reported that Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick directed a Senate committee to assess the impact of increased homestead exemptions in past years, with the possibility of raising them further next session.

Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, chairs that committee and has been at the forefront of efforts to expand homestead exemptions. Currently, the first \$140,000 of a residence’s taxable value is exempt. For those over 65 or with disabilities, the exemption rises to \$200,000.

Patrick hopes to raise the homestead exemption to \$180,000 and to lower the age at which homeowners qualify for a senior exemption from 65 to 55. For his part, Abbott is pushing a constitutional amendment that would eliminate school property taxes for homeowners.

“The state will fully fund public education without you having to pay for it in your homestead,” Abbott said.

GOP set to gather in Dallas for midterm convention

President Trump and other GOP leaders hope this week’s midterm convention in Dallas will help the party win roughly 35 races that could determine control of Congress, according to The Dallas Morning News. The Senate race between Ken Paxton and James Talarico is, by all indications, among the biggest.

Trump appeared on Patrick’s podcast to promote the convention being held at American Airlines Center, home of the Dallas Mavericks. It is expected to draw 20,000 attendees over two days.

The first-of-its-kind midterm convention is intended to generate enthusiasm for the GOP candidates in what is predicted to be a tough election year for the party.



LT. GOV. DAN PATRICK IS FIGHTING FOR RURAL TEXAS:

- ✓ **Protecting Texas farms, ranches, and natural resources from ownership by hostile foreign interests.**
- ✓ **Cutting property taxes and continuing to push for additional relief.**
- ✓ **Protecting Texas water and investing in the infrastructure rural communities need.**
- ✓ **Supporting rural law enforcement.**
- ✓ **Standing up for Texas agriculture and the people who produce our food and energy.**

Early Voting: Oct.19-30 ★ Election Day: Nov. 3

DanPatrick.org

Pd Pol Ad - Texans For Dan Patrick

Former Brite Ranch foes ally

Ranch, continued from Page 1

managing the ranch, and on September 3, 2023, the court appointed an interim trustee for that role — former State Comptroller Susan Combs — to handle financial management, such as paying bills and distributing revenue to the trustees. Jim, Cuatro and Raphael, Jim’s daughter, objected to Combs’ appointment by District Judge Rex Emerson because they alleged Combs was a close friend of Beau’s wife, the late Kathleen Harnett White. A December 2024 appeals court ruling out of El Paso reversed the district court’s decision, saying improper jury instructions played a critical role, and Jim was reinstated as trustee.

What seemed to be the final showdown in the eight-year-long battle with multiple lawsuits and hundreds of filings has started to fizzle out with Hester Ann’s abandonment of a trial and the other siblings seemingly in sincere Kumbaya. However, sources close to the litigants, who wished to remain unnamed to sustain their relationship with the family, said the defendants in the trial — Jim, Cuatro, Mac and Connor — have asked the district judge in the case, Ben Woodward, to enforce keeping the trial and convert it to a bench trial. The requesting parties said a bench trial is needed to rule on the possibility of giving more land to them because Hester Ann has not paid any court fees or bills related to the maintenance of the ranch, the source said. As of The Big Bend Sentinel deadline, Woodward had not ruled on that request. Jim and Cuatro have long maintained in court that they have no intention of selling whatever portion of the ranch they end up with and instead want to retain the land’s legacy, while the intentions of Mac, formerly Beau, Connor and Hester Ann are unknown. The parties in this case have all declined to comment over the years, on the advice of their attorneys.

The alliance of Jim, Cuatro, Mac, and Connor follows years of sometimes aggressive legal maneuvers between Jim, Cuatro and the other three. When the 2023 jury trial stripped Jim of his role as the trustee of the ranch, where he lived, he was forced off the land, and Combs barred his family from accessing it — even filing criminal trespass complaints with the county sheriff when they tried to remove their possessions from the ranch headquarters.

Even more contentious was the issue of the then 60-year-old Connor, whom both Mac and Beau adopted in January 2022. Both had no biological children. Cuatro and his sister Raphael called it a “sham adoption” intended to dilute the worth of the ranch to the other heirs. Despite numerous court filings and a separate lawsuit, the issue of whether it was a “sham” was never ruled on. And remarkably, the parties objecting to the unusual adoption went ahead and recognized Connor as the late Beau’s heir trustee of his portions of the ranch. It seems clear that years of litigation and likely hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorney fees played a role in the once contentious legal combatants wanting to finally resolve the case and accept the role of Connors.

The Brite Ranch, abutting Capote Peak in southwestern Presidio County, 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](#).

Marfa names Homecoming king and queen



Marfa High School 2026 Homecoming King Ayden Alvarez, and Homecoming Queen Madison Cash. Alvarez and Cash were crowned last week during Marfa ISD’s Homecoming celebrations.

Ferguson respalda el nuevo programa infantil en la biblioteca

Por Diana Aguirre Armendáriz

PRESIDIO — La Biblioteca Pública de Presidio puso en marcha oficialmente un nuevo proyecto educativo y de socialización diseñado especialmente para niños pequeños de entre 1 y 3 años de edad. El evento de apertura contó con el respaldo del alcalde John Ferguson, reflejando el compromiso de la administración local con el desarrollo de la infancia y las familias de la comunidad.

El programa, que busca fomentar la lectura temprana y facilitar la interacción entre los pequeños, está encabezado por la coordinadora Carmen Elguezabal. El objetivo principal es apoyar a los padres de familia en la transición previa al ingreso de los menores al sistema escolar.

“Nos encanta el apoyo que recibimos en nuestro día de arranque del programa, y agradezco enormemente a Julissa Chapa, por la lectura compartida, y las dinámicas que realizó para los pequeños quienes lo disfrutaron mucho”, compartió Elguezabal. “A las mamis interesadas les recordamos que no solo se les leerá un cuento; también podrán usar las computadora y aprenderán mientras juegan”.

Por su parte, el alcalde John Ferguson y las plataformas oficiales del ayuntamiento han extendido una invitación abierta a toda la población para aprovechar estos espacios comunitarios gratuitos, destacando la importancia de la biblioteca pública como un pilar de integración social.

Las sesiones de este “Cuentacuentos para Niños Pequeños” se llevarán a cabo de manera regular todos los martes, en un horario de 10:30 a.m. a 11:00 a.m. Los tutores interesados en registrar a sus hijos pueden acudir a las instalaciones de la biblioteca o comunicarse directamente al teléfono 432-229-3317.

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PS Form 3526, September 2007 (Page 1)

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YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE! ISU VOTO ES SU VOZ!

BREWSTER COUNTY VOTERS

From Federal to State and Local offices, in the November 2026 General Election, Democratic candidates offer better alternatives than obstruction, division, corruption and policies that harm our citizens, businesses, communities, state and nation.

Core Values of Democrats:

* An economy focused on the middle-class and small businesses, not the super-wealthy and large corporation.

* Equal opportunity and Justice under the law for everyone.

* Available and affordable healthcare for all.

* The right to privacy in reproductive health and other personal decisions.

* Support for essential industries while protecting our health and the environment.

* Advancements in public and higher education for our children’s future.

* Respect and care for our Veterans.

* Security, safety, and health for our nation and people.

* Honesty and transparency in leadership.

EARLY VOTING: October 19– October 23, 8 am – 5 pm; Saturday October 24, 7 am – 7 pm; Sunday October 25, 1 pm - 7 pm; October 26 – October 30, 7 am – 7 pm

EARLY VOTING LOCATION: Val Clark Beard Complex 203 N 7th St, Alpine

ELECTION DAY: November 3, 7 am – 7 pm

BALLOTS BY MAIL: Eligible voters can request mail ballots from the County Election Office 432-837-6000 Ext 6230. Deadline to request a ballot by mail is October 23. To be counted, mail ballots must be returned to the County Election Office by 4 pm on November 3.

ELECTION DAY VOTING LOCATIONS:

Precinct 1 & 2 --Judge Val Clark Beard Office Complex, 203 N 7th, Alpine

Precinct 3—Marathon Community Center 150 N 2nd St, Marathon

Precincts 4 & 8—Alpine Civic Center 801 West Holland Ave, Alpine

Precincts 5, 6, & 7—JW “Red” Pattillo Community Center, 201 Rex Ivey Road, Study Butte

No phones at the polls, but you can clip below and bring it with you when you vote!

Texas no-longer allows “Straight-ticket” voting by Political Party. Instead, candidates have their Party affiliation beside their names. Look for those with “DEM” beside their name to vote for each individual Democrat on the ballot.

We strongly urge a vote FOR the provision creating Emergency Services District #2 for Northern Brewster County.

ALL DEMOCRATS OPPOSE ANY BARRIERS, LIGHTING, WIRE, AND WATER OBSTRUCTIONS THROUGHOUT THE BORDER REGION OF THE BIG BEND!

In this election, residents of the City of Alpine will also cast separate ballots in their non-partisan General Election as follows:

For Mayor – Candidate Catherine Eaves

For Council Member Ward 5 – Candidates Rozolen Stanford and Isaiah Eytayo Olayinka

Nine Charter Amendment Provisions

Paid by Brewster County Democratic Party, 107 E Lockhart Ave, Alpine, Texas 79830

Mary Bell Lockhart, Secretary-Treasurer



WRITE-IN

IDA DOMINGUEZ

FOR PRESIDIO COUNTY COMMISSIONER
PRECINCT 4

A Stronger
Presidio County
Together

PEOPLE

COMMUNITY

ACCOUNTABILITY

RESULTS

MY PRIORITIES

- 

Listen to the People
- 

Control County Spending
Make responsible decisions
with taxpayer dollars.
- 

Work to Keep
Taxes from Increasing
- 

Seek State and
Federal Funding
- 

Support Our Youth
and Create
More Opportunities

I am a lifelong resident of Presidio County, a property owner, and a taxpayer. I understand the needs and frustrations of our community, and I will work with a servant’s heart to keep our county strong for current and future generations.

Faith · Service · Community
DEEP ROOTS. BRIGHTER DAYS.

★ HOW TO WRITE-IN IDA DOMINGUEZ ★

ON YOUR BALLOT

1

Find the office for County Commissioner Precinct 4.

County Commissioner
Precinct 4
(Vote for One)

Ida Dominguez

2

Fill in the oval next to the blank write-in line.



3

Write in Ida Dominguez clearly on the line.

Ida Dominguez



ELECTION DAY
NOV. 3, 2026

YOUR VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

POLITICAL AD PAID BY IDA DOMINGUEZ

LETTERS

Attorney touts experience with public policy

I am running for County Commissioner Precinct 4, and I ask for your vote. Precinct 4 encompasses most of Marfa west of Alamito Creek and the ranchland to the north and the west, all the way to the river, including most of Chispa Road. My husband and I live on a ranch west of town where he is the foreman. We grew up in Central Texas and moved to the Big Bend years ago.

For more than 30 years I’ve worked public issues as a lawyer, volunteer advocate, and as a lobbyist, learning how government really works. I am board certified in Legislative and Campaign Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. I bring relationships and experience to Presidio County to work for its future.

Most recently, I’ve put my time and

experience to use fighting against the Border Wall boondoggle. We don’t need it. It’s a waste of money. And, it will gut our tourism economy. And, this county needs so much more out of its government: Healthcare, better schools, and better roads for a start.

As commissioner I will represent Marfa and the land, but I will fight for the whole county.

In many ways I am already doing the work as commissioner, such as by advocating for a new election administrator position to take a complicated job off the plates our county clerk and tax assessor-collector, helping the airport with a land-swap deal to enable improvements to a runway, and, of course, protecting our land and our tourism economy by fighting the border wall. I helped expose the border

wall contractors for plowing through the Porvenir Massacre site, working to protect an important, undervalued piece of Presidio County history.

I also have experience overseeing budgets as board president of the Texas Civil Rights Project (counsel in Friends of Ruidosa Church v. DHS fighting the border wall) and other nonprofits. Bringing our tax dollars back down to Presidio County takes a work ethic, good relationships with other elected officials, and the gumption to leave no opportunity untaken.

Presidio County deserves good, honest government. I’m here to provide it.

Susan Hays
Democratic Nominee for County Commissioner, Pct. 4

Write-in candidate has deep county roots

Presidio County has been my life-long home, and my roots here run deep. My family’s history in this county reaches back to the late 19th century, when my grandfather, Esteban Ochoa, established Rancho Ochoa about 10 miles upriver from Presidio. I am proud to be a fifth-generation member of this land and community.

I spent the first 25 years of my life in Presidio. After marrying my husband, Danny Dominguez, we moved to Marfa when he joined the Marfa Police Department. In 1997, he was elected Presidio County Sheriff, and our family has continued making Presidio County our home.

Over the years, service to our community has become an important part

of my life. Through our church and community partnerships, I have helped with Christmas giveaways, back-to-school backpack and school-supply distributions, clothing and shoe drives, and other efforts focused especially on our children and families.

That same desire to serve is why I am asking the voters of Precinct 4 for the opportunity to serve as their County Commissioner.

If elected, I will work for fair and responsible county budgets, protection of our precious water resources, and common-sense approaches to border security using our existing personnel and modern technology.

But serving as commissioner is also about listening. I want residents to

know that their concerns matter and that they have someone willing to hear them, ask questions, and represent them at Commissioners Court.

My faith has taught me that leadership begins with service. I am not seeking this office simply for a title. I am asking for the opportunity to work for the people and the county that have been part of my life for generations.

On November 3, I humbly ask the voters of Precinct 4 to write in Ida Dominguez for Presidio County Commissioner, Precinct 4.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ida Dominguez Write-in Candidate
Presidio County Commissioner
Precinct 4

AIDEN GONZALEZ AND MAKAYLA PEREZ FOR THE TEXAS TRIBUNE
Gov. Greg Abbott, left, and Democratic gubernatorial nominee Gina Hinojosa.

Abbott outraised Gina Hinojosa but burned through much of his campaign

Kayla Guo, The Texas Tribune

Gov. Greg Abbott raked in over \$20 million from July through late September, outpacing Democratic challenger Gina Hinojosa’s more than \$13 million haul — and also far outspending her in what has shaped up to be the Republican incumbent’s most competitive election yet.

Abbott ended the reporting period with \$18.2 million in his war chest, dwarfing Hinojosa’s \$4 million. But the cash disparity is far narrower than it was at the start of the year, when the governor disclosed a staggering \$105.7 million on hand to Hinojosa’s less than \$1 million.

Since the start of the year, Abbott has burned through a whopping \$141.3 million, including \$74.1 million during the latest reporting period, spanning July 1 to Sept. 24. Despite spending only about one-sixth of that amount — \$12.1 million — over the 12-week span, Hinojosa has maintained a steady position in public polling, trailing Abbott by five points or less in most surveys.

Three polls last month put the Austin Democrat narrowly ahead — an unprecedented sight for Democrats in Texas. Several election forecasters also shifted the race toward Hinojosa in recent weeks. “Despite being outspent by Abbott 10-to-1, Hinojosa is leading with the key constituencies needed to win, and her momentum is only building,” Hinojosa’s campaign said in a Monday press release. “Texans are ready for change, and on November 3rd, they’ll send Hinojosa to the governor’s mansion.”

Abbott’s campaign has projected confidence, with the governor’s top strategist dismissing one recent poll, in which Hinojosa led by 3 points, as “bogus” and “garbage.” Abbott himself said recently that his internal polling paints a different picture.

“As we head into the home stretch of the campaign, Governor Abbott continues to receive strong support from Texans who want a safer, stronger, and more affordable Texas,” Abbott campaign manager Kim Snyder said in a statement. “With Election Day less

than one month away, Governor Abbott has the resources he needs to win and support Republican candidates up and down the ballot.”

Hinojosa’s fundraising picked up substantially in the final weeks of September, namely after a public poll was released Sept. 17 showing her leading Abbott for the first time this cycle. Her campaign noted that 74% of the people who gave to her campaign were first-time donors. The mid-September poll marked the first public survey — excluding “internal polls” commissioned by campaigns or political groups — to show Abbott trailing in any of his four gubernatorial campaigns, according to RealClearPolling.

The governor’s unusually competitive race comes as Republicans across the country face political headwinds driven by President Donald Trump’s low approval ratings. Abbott is also grappling with voter backlash to data centers and property taxes, issues that have caused heartburn for the long-reigning Texas GOP, and a Senate race atop the ballot where Democrat James Talarico has narrowly led Republican Ken Paxton.

In the lieutenant governor’s race, GOP incumbent Dan Patrick raised \$6.3 million to Democrat Vikki Goodwin’s \$1.2 million. He ended the period with \$24.4 million on hand compared to her \$643,000, even after outspending the Democratic lawmaker nearly 26-to-1. Republicans in other statewide races also reported cash-on-hand advantages over their Democratic opponents, including in the contests for attorney general, comptroller, land commissioner, agriculture commissioner and railroad commissioner.

Unpacking the gubernatorial donors

Abbott’s biggest donations since July 1 included \$1 million apiece from Pennsylvania school voucher advocate Jeff Yass, Airbnb co-founder Joe Gebbia, Dallas billionaire Kenneth Fisher and Florida businessman Jack Dwyer. Amarillo businessman and GOP megadonor Alex Fairly gave \$1.5 million through his company, DealOn LLC, and his political group, Texas Repub-

lican Leadership Fund.

The governor also received six-figure donations from several familiar faces. Midland oil executive Javaid Anwar contributed \$750,000; Corpus Christi billionaire Robert Rowling kicked in \$500,000, as did Texas Tech Board of Regents Chair Cody Campbell. And far-right West Texas megadonor Tim Dunn gave Abbott \$100,000 through his group, Texans United for a Conservative Majority.

The vast majority of Hinojosa’s haul came from small-dollar donors. Her campaign noted that she received over 248,000 contributions from more than 136,000 unique donors, with an average contribution of \$53.37.

Hinojosa, a former Austin ISD board president, received her largest donation from the American Federation of Teachers, which gave \$250,000.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a widely anticipated 2028 presidential contender, also contributed \$200,000, as did Susan Sarofim, a Houston businesswoman and widow of billionaire investment manager Fayeze Sarofim. Other notable contributions included \$100,000 from the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, \$100,000 from Democratic megadonor Karla Jurvetson and \$25,000 from a group associated with Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear — another potential 2028 contender and the head of the Democratic Governors Association.

Nodding to the small-dollar donations, Hinojosa said in a statement that she is running a “people-powered campaign.”

“From now until Election Day,” she said, “I will continue fighting for a Texas that puts working people over billionaires, because every Texan deserves the opportunity to achieve the American Dream.”

Disclosure: Javaid Anwar has been a major financial supporter of The Texas Tribune. Airbnb and Cody and Tara Campbell have been financial supporters within the past five years. Financial supporters play no role in our journalism.

This article first appeared on The Texas Tribune at [texastribune.org](https://www.texastribune.org).

music * art * food * drink

SAVE THE DATE
COMMUNITY DAY 2026



Ruidosa, Texas
Saturday, November 14th
1:00PM - 6:00PM

visit www.ruidosachurch.org
for more

Help the paper thrive

A letter from the former publishers

Dear Sentinel readers,

First off, thank you. We know it’s been a confusing and turbulent time and we deeply appreciate your support of The Big Bend Sentinel.

Last summer, we sold The Big Bend Sentinel. This was a difficult decision, but we felt that this was the right thing to do, as our family had relocated to Austin and it was no longer feasible for us to run the paper. The brief, year long Sentinel News Project ownership made multiple changes including ceasing to publish a print edition.

After months of working to recover the assets, we’re excited to pass the newspaper operations on to a new nonprofit entity, The Big Bend Reporting Project, based locally in Marfa to continue the now 100 year old legacy of this institution.

Kate Bubacz is the new executive director of The Big Bend Reporting Project. She is uniquely-suited to take on this role overseeing The Big Bend Sentinel. Kate is a veteran journalist with experience at ABC News and The Wall Street Journal. She is based in Presidio and has assembled a team of local community members and media experts for an independent board to directors to steer the paper into a new era. This print edition for Chinati Weekend marks a new, yet familiar, day for the future of the paper. We believe a transition to a non profit provides the best chance for the paper to remain a vibrant part of the community. But it can’t thrive without you.

So, we ask you to join us in supporting The Big Bend Sentinel.

Warmest regards,
Maisie Crow and Max Kabat

'Well, how did I get here'

A letter from the editor, Rob D'Amico, on how turbulent times led to a new future

It was a rough, painful week in mid June. *The Big Bend Sentinel* was laid out and ready to go with an amazing front-page story by Sam Karas on eminent domain’s impact on families with the creation of Big Bend National Park. A giant, intriguing historical photo sat below the big bold headline. But I had to tell the publisher, Roger Black, “We can’t print.”

Always optimistic, he replied, “Why? We have to.” However, logistically, and financially, there was no way to do it. We were behind on paying the printing press and the distribution team, and there would be no way to pay the huge postage bill due the day of mailing.

“I’ll find the money,” the publisher and owner said. He never did. Just as all eyes turned to the paper to find out what was happening with federal construction, we had to stop printing to stay solvent.

I had repeatedly relayed the warning signs starting in February. Advertising revenue was down, while printing and postage costs were up. For every \$1 paper we printed, we were losing \$3. The only positive sign was an increase in subscriptions, likely from border wall coverage. A one-time grant kept us alive March through April. Promises from the publisher to raise money were repeated weekly, with no success.

Meanwhile, I had my hands full. Changes in staff left me handling most of the writing and editing, tracking advertising, billing advertisers, and trying to get a grip on bookkeeping, all while the border wall coverage was ramping up. I was working all day, seven days a week. Without Ariele Gentiles, my steadfast copy editor, I would have collapsed, or run away. Kate Bubacz, who will be leading the new nonprofit heading *The Big Bend Sentinel*, was freelancing, but wasn’t in full swing to help. Sam Karas had committed to only covering the border wall after her departure as a full-time staff member in March, unable to work full-time with missed payroll. But she marched on covering the wall and broke several news stories. Jennifer Pittinger arrived in the spring to help with administrative tasks, but she was only part-time and still learning the ropes.

Amidst all this, the publisher fell very ill. The only thing keeping the team going with the online version was the notion that we didn’t want to kill a 100-year-old newspaper. I kept thinking of David Byrne’s Talking Heads line: “Well, how did I get here?”

The foundation begins to suffer

A year ago, we were meeting our deadlines, doing investigative pieces and longer-form features. Former publishers Maisie Crow and Max Kabat had created a solid foundation for the newspaper. They worked tirelessly (and didn’t pay themselves) when they bought *The Big Bend Sentinel* from Robert and Rosario Halpern, who had run the publication for decades. They set up an innovative model of having their Sentinel coffeshop help fund the newspaper. It was enough to cover some of the expenses. Crow was the top editor and took amazing photographs. Kabat made the ask to advertisers on an ongoing basis and immersed himself in networking with other publishers. The newspaper was breaking even, employing three full-time people and several part-timers.

With a change in life — a young toddler — and desire to move and focus on other career priorities, the couple decided to sell the newspaper last fall. At

the same time, we lost our top-notch reporter, Mary Cantrell, who took a job at Marfa Public Radio. But we were in a rhythm, with me trying my best to be a leader and making sure we had a solid product each week. We felt it was possible for someone to come along and help fundraise to expand our coverage and staff.

Roger Black had toyed with the idea of purchasing the paper for more than a year. An accomplished creative director at national newspapers and magazines, he seemed equipped to shepherd the paper in the future. He also was equipped with a lot of promises — a nonprofit board ready to fundraise, big-time initial investors, and raises ahead for staffers. When he took the helm after his purchase, he grimly announced that his biggest investor had pulled out. It wasn’t a good sign.

It became immediately clear to me that without an initial investment we were going nowhere new. Black totally transformed the look of the paper with new fonts, changes in the standard layout and what he viewed as a cleaner logo. Although, if I had a dollar for every time someone told me we needed to “bring back the horse” that was part of the masthead logo that Roger had deleted, well, I could retire.

The community reaction to the new design was mixed — some appreciating the new look, others complaining it looked disastrous. My overall sense was that the majority of people would prefer to have the old Big Bend Sentinel back. Amidst all the strife, our office manager Mary Etherington left, unhappy with the workplace environment. No one was spending the time needed to sell ads, resulting in declining ad revenue.

With financial pressures mounting, the design element also began to chip away at any chance for success at the newspaper. Black and his intern began spending an inordinate amount of time laying out the paper. I once witnessed him spending six hours on a front page. He routinely looked at a page design — which I thought looked pretty good — only to declare it all wrong, at which point he would redo the entire page. The result was the printing press in Monahans waiting for us to finish at 10:30 p.m., when our deadline was 4 p.m. Mistakes, even big ones on the front page, were common as the chaotic system of layout caused the intern to send previous, uncorrected versions of pages to the printer. Black and I moved the deadline for stories to 5 p.m. on Mondays to accommodate the lengthy design process.

For Sam Karas, that deadline was absurd. Why demand all stories for a Thursday paper on Mondays? Previously, reporters would file all stories by Tuesday evening, with latitude given for some writing to continue through noon on Wednesday. Karas, who like all of us, was fed up with a low salary, missed payrolls and the new deadlines, announced she was leaving the newspaper — well, kind of.

As the border wall issue erupted, she said she would only work on wall coverage for us. She was my pillar, a partner and friend for my life at the newspaper, but I understood her decision. The wall is an existential threat to her love of the border and her dreams to remain here for life, so why get mired in the turmoils at the paper that had nothing to do with reporting? Besides, it worked out rather well in our work being acknowledged as the best coverage



Vol. 94 No. 10 • May 28, 2026

Our 100th Year

Marfa, Texas • TWO DOLLARS

No Alpine water rate hikes—yet

Charges to pay for new well tabled until June meeting

By GINA YERA

Residents got a reprieve from higher water rates on May 19 when the Alpine City Council voted down a measure that would have increased the base rate by as much as \$3 and the usage rate \$1 per 1,000 gallons to \$5.50 per 1,000 gallons. Rate increases still could be possible in the coming weeks pending on city finances facing new well expenditures.

The vote was unanimous, after City Council members requested information comparing usage rates from other area municipalities and instructing city staff to bring the proposal back for a vote during the June 16 council meeting.

The council considered the rate increases after saying funds are needed to help pay for a new municipal well that is currently being dug to replace the failed Roberts Well #3 and to help fund future infrastructure projects needed after decades of delay.

Roberts Well #3 suffered a mechanical failure in late April and was later found to be structurally unsound.

The loss of Roberts Well #3 reduced the water supply to the west side of Alpine, triggering an emergency that quickly escalated from Stage 2 to Stage 4 water restrictions. On Monday, the city announced that with the addition of the Cartwright Well, it would now go to Stage 3 restrictions and possibly hit Stage 2 within seven days.

The Cartwright Well is a privately owned well from which the city will be purchasing water. The city has purchased water from this well in the past, said City Secretary Geo Calderon.

The addition of the Cartwright Well will allow the city to discontinue its shunting of water across town by truck, lower the water restriction for residents and fill the municipal swimming pool as summer vacation starts for local children, Calderon said.

However, the city is still working to dig a new well next to the

Continued on page 2



Visitors at Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend National Park, where confusion about border barriers remains.

Billionaire’s fight to acquire land near Shafter continues

Mining company intent on starting operations again

By ROE D’AMICO

The owner of the Glibbo Creek Ranch resort north of Shafter is suing to claim the right to purchase hundreds of acres owned by the nearby silver mine, which reportedly is gearing up to begin operations again as the price of silver has surged.

Shafter is 40 miles south of

Marfa, and the resort—spanning about 30,000 acres tucked in the Chinati Mountains, six miles north of the town—abuts much of the property owned by various mining companies through the decades.

The resort’s owner, John Pointexter, under the corporate name of Southwestern Holdings, filed a lawsuit in November against the previous mine owners and the new owner, Black Bear Minerals, headquartered in Australia, asserting a lease agreement he had on various plots of land gave him the “first right of refusal,” mean-

ing that he has the right to try and purchase the land first.

The land in question—hundreds of acres—in, home to any of the mine’s key operation locations.

Pointexter had previously sought to buy the entirety of the mine, including all the land where previous shafts were dug and where excavations were processed for the silver.

Sources, who wished to remain unnamed because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter, said the mine owner at the time, Aurecana of British Columbia, Canada, refused to even reply to his offer of \$55 million. Those sources said Pointexter’s intent was to leave the land preserved with no future mining.

Pointexter, whose worth is estimated in the billions, made his fortunes producing heavy commercial trucks. He is currently restoring several of Shafter’s buildings with the intent of making it a historical tourist destination.

The mine’s heyday was in 1999. *Continued on page 9*

Big Bend Park chiefs want cooperation, not waivers

Seven former superintendents of Big Bend National Park sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Markwayne Mullin last week imploring the federal government not to waive environmental and cultural resource protection laws fast-tracking border wall construction and to communicate clearly with park staff and the local community about their plans for security infrastructure in and around the park.

“There does not need to be a conflict between a strong border, a thriving local economy, and conservation of the widest, most intact landscapes of Texas and our nation,” the letter reads.

The letter was drafted in response to a series of recent developments in the ongoing saga of barrier infrastructure upgrades along the U.S.-Mexico border. On May 11, DHS awarded Southwest

Continued on page 4

INSIDE: THE CLASSES OF 2026

Graduation: *Presidio High School seniors celebrate college acceptances. It was a big year. Among the high points: The cross-country team qualifying for the state championships and the “Presidio Vision 2025” competition, presenting innovative urban development concepts for the community. See yearbook portraits from Alpine, Fort Davis and Marfa as well as Presidio. Pages 5-8*



Flash floods strand Presidio drivers at creek



View from a car at Terrenos Creek Saturday during the flood.

By KATE BUBACZ

At least a dozen drivers were stranded for hours as the Terrenos Creek flooded outside of Presidio Saturday evening. A severe thunderstorm passed over the interior of Big Bend Ranch State Park early afternoon on Saturday, dropping rain north of Saucedo.

LAWSUIT PUTS SCRUTINY ON BORDER WALL

Unfair bidding practices claimed

By SAM KARAS, PERLA TRAVEJO and MISTY HARRIS

When Tommy Fisher set out to build a section of border wall in South Texas during the first Trump administration, the project quickly became ensnared in controversy. Experts raised concerns about shoddy construction and signs of erosion.

Beyond that, Fisher’s company had received funding from a group called We Build the Wall, an influential conservative nonprofit that included President Donald Trump’s then-political strategist Steve Bannon as a board member. Some of its leaders eventually went to prison for their involvement in the venture.

Even the president denounced the project.

“It was only done to make me look bad.” “I disagreed with doing this very small (tiny) section of wall, in a tricky area, by a private group which raised money by ads,” Trump wrote on X in response to reporting by *ProPublica* and *The Texas Tribune* in 2020 detailing problems with the wall project.

“It was only done to make me look bad,” the post continued. But none of this stopped Fisher’s company from getting subsequent border wall contracts, including from the state of Texas. And now the federal government has awarded his company over \$9 billion to build even more border wall—including a \$1.2 billion contract in the Big Bend region of Texas, where residents have continued to press for answers about the government’s plans in and around one of the country’s

largest national parks. And, as during Trump’s first term, Fisher’s work is stirring up controversy again. A New York-based construction company has sued the Trump administration after it awarded the bulk of new Texas border wall contracts to North Dakota-headquartered Fisher, Sauer & Gravel and another company.

Posillico Civil Inc.’s lawsuit, filed in the Court of Federal Claims in Washington, D.C., on May 13, offers one of the first public glimpses into the procurement process along the border in Texas. The suit claims that out of the 11 prequalified vendors for the wall projects, U.S. Customs and Border Protection awarded nearly \$4 billion — about 73% of the value of the contracts — to just two: Fisher’s firm and Barnard Construction, based in Montana. The work also includes wall projects around El Paso, Laredo, Del Rio and the Rio Grande Valley.

The Trump administration has come under scrutiny for awarding no-bid contracts and the lack of transparency around its accelerated border wall construction plans, moves designed to help the president achieve his key campaign promise of securing the border.

During his first term, Trump’s moves also faced criticism. A *Continued on page 10*

Herrera takes commissioner seat in runoff

Jesús “Junie” Herrera came out victorious in the only local race in Tuesday’s primary runoff—the Democratic candidate for Presidio County Precinct 2 county commissioner. Since he has no Republican opposition in the November general election, he will assume te seat in January.

His opponent, Fernando Juárez, a former Presidio City Council member, withdrew in mid May after he discovered the Hatch Act prohibits federal law enforcement employees from running in partisan elections. (Juárez had left retirement to work for Homeland Security.) Ballots had been printed, Juárez’s name remained on the ballot, but he would have not been able to take office if he won the runoff.

Herrera won, 189 to, by Tuesday. He had come out on top in the March 3 primary with 46.88% of the vote. Juárez got 34.03% and incumbent Margarito Hernandez, 16.37%. Without a majority there was a runoff.

Highly contested runoffs for both parties were also on the ballot. Attorney General Ken Paxton defeated U.S. Senator incumbent John Cornyn for the Republican U.S. Senate seat. In another key race, state Sen. Mayes Middleton defeated U.S. Congressman Chip Roy for the Republican nomination for attorney general.

See all runoff results at texas-tribune.org.

Bright future ahead for Sentinel

A letter from Executive Director Kate Bubacz

The Big Bend Sentinel has proudly served readers in Marfa and the Big Bend region since 1926. Founded in an era when the cattle industry was thriving, our success has been as rocky as the landscape. We report on local government proceedings, art and community events, and the larger-than-life characters found across West Texas, covering an area larger than South Carolina with a dogged team of three reporters.

Starting in October 2026, *The Big Bend Sentinel* became a nonprofit newsroom, with a print edition available regularly. Instead of having a single owner, the paper now belongs to the community, who are represented as board members, donors, and writers. Your financial and editorial contributions will fuel the newspapers’ success as we work to expand our reporting and future-proof *The Big Bend Sentinel* for the next century.

The impact of a donation to a nonprofit newsroom is significant. It enables us to keep doing the investigative and accountability journalism that you rely on, and newsstands stocked with the print edition that is vital in an area with limited cell service. Our coverage stitches communities together and unites a region. Over the course of its history, our writers broke the story of the border wall construction and tracked its now-stalled progress. Our reporting has exposed small town corruption, stopped a proposed nuclear dump site in Sierra Blanca, and freed a man from prison in Ojinaga.

A strong tradition of community building has permeated the last 50 years of the paper’s history. Previous

owners Maisie Crow and Max Kabat ran the paper alongside a popular coffee shop in Marfa, which continues to sell print copies and merchandise to support the paper. Before them, Robert and Rosario Halpern cultivated an open-door policy in the newsroom with election results posted on the windows and a pot of coffee available to anyone who stopped by to chat. Our newsroom continues to have an office at The Sentinel coffee shop, and we are still available to trade tips.

Interest in *The Big Bend Sentinel* extends far beyond the Big Bend region. We are often cited in regional publications and watched by national outlets. *The Big Bend Sentinel* continues to uphold its responsibility to report on local news and hold leaders into account. It’s a job that’s always hard, and never boring. The stories of the Big Bend are stories that define our families, our region, our Great State, and enhance our community’s reach in the world beyond. For 100 Years *The Big Bend Sentinel* has faithfully and factually brought these important stories to print, and with your help, we hope to make it another century.

Our Board:

Billy Arnold
Hilary Beebe
Kate Bubacz
Fernanda Camarena
Max Kabat

Our Reporters:

Rob D’Amico
Sam Karas
Ariele Gentiles
Jenny Pittinger (photographer)

Support your community newspaper with a donation to our nonprofit today.



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River Trips
Bicycling
Offroad
Hiking
Bird Watching



Reinout Zeeger will present Marfa Lights – 25 Unexpected Visitors

In its 3rd year Marfa MUST helps connect artists far and wide

By CATCHING MARGINOT

When a close friend asked artist Jeanhee Yu to help him set up his studio in Marfa, she was more than excited at the proposition. Yu, with a background in the New York fashion industry from a college student up until the COVID-19 pandemic, knew the move to small-town Texas was one she was up for.

“A good friend of mine wanted me to come and help him with his studio,” Yu said. “I was like, ‘I’ve always wanted to come,’ which turned out to be a three or four month project, and now I’m here.”

Yu became smitten with Marfa right away, finding a charm in the connection of a small community filled with creative people.

“There’s just something about the quality of culture here,” Yu said. “It’s the caliber of New York and you can find this small village charm.”

As Yu settled in Marfa she found not only discovering the contemporary art scene of Judd and the Chinati Foundation important, but also the local one as well. Noticing that there wasn’t just one source to go by in terms of finding more information about local artists and where to find their work, Marfa MUST was born in 2024. With the help of Dim Zayan, there is a fully accessible website where an interactive digital map and directory can be found, along with many artists and their work.

“I just thought -- because I thought I was only going to be here for a few months -- I really wanted to see what’s going on locally,” Yu said, “and organize an open studio amongst people we knew through people we knew. It started off four of us, then it went to three, then it went to two. Now it’s just Dim and me; in every season we have help as well.”

Since its genesis in 2024, Marfa MUST has been a success with its goal always rooted in human connection and to have artists that want to be discovered, discoverable. This year there is an emphasis on a scheduled open studio to concentrate the traffic flow, attention and the focus of each artist.

“So by having a featured artist within a specific time block, we help to focus navigation for the visitors and for the artists,” Yu said. “What we found was a lot of artists get to visit each other.”

Among the many talented artists visitors can find through the help of Marfa MUST, the organization is hosting its first international featured guest artist – Belgian multidisciplinary artist and musician Reinout Zeeger, aka Xavier Van Eeckhoutte. As part of Group Exhibition V3, Zeeger will present Marfa Lights – 25 Unexpected Visitors. The exhibition features 25 photographic works that are deeply personal to the artist.

“I’m trying to understand what lies behind things, behind the material world we see and experience,” Zeeger said.

“I don’t restrict myself to a single discipline. I use photography, text, music, sound and installation, depending on what an idea requires,” he said. “For me, art can be a carrier of mystery, a glimpse of another reality behind the visible world.”

After the unexpected loss of his daughter, Zeeger and his wife, Leen, traveled to Marfa a year later, where he discovered what would be the soul of his exhibition – his wife’s boots.

“One night, around midnight, I was walking through Marfa taking photographs,” he recalled. “I suddenly had the idea of placing her boots beneath a streetlight in the center of town, with the lights of Hotel Paisano in the background. That is how the photograph Marfa Lights came into existence.”

“For me, that is the meaning of unexpected,” he said. “The photograph is not simply about the famous phenomenon of the Marfa Lights. For me, it is about the mystery of life, loss, hope and beginning again. It is about light confronting darkness and, ultimately, the triumph of life over death. A pair of boots were bought for a journey that never happened. A year later, they made it to Marfa anyway. They became a photograph. That photograph became an exhibition. The exhibition became intertwined with music. And now something much larger is growing out of it.

For me, ultimately, this is a story about resilience.”

What started as an idea of connecting artists and people together with Marfa MUST has now become a solid partner with the Chinati Foundation in its third season. More information about the talented artists and programming can be found at marfamust.org.

Multimedia exhibition looks at the wall conflict

La Frontera, a multimedia exhibition curated by regional advocate Yolanda Alvarado, brings together artists whose work examines the Texas-Mexico border at a moment of profound change.

Featuring artists Brian Finke, Hannah Gentiles, Jordan Vonderhaar, Hillary Pierce, Natalie Newman, and Yolanda Alvarado, the exhibition presents multiple perspectives on a landscape that is simultaneously home, wilderness, political boundary, cultural history, and contested space.

The exhibition moves between the quiet beauty of the Big Bend – its desert, moun-



HANNAH GENTILES

tains, and river – and the increasingly visible presence of border militarization and construction. Images and works documenting rallies, protests, landowner press conferences, and construction activity are presented alongside peaceful landscapes of the region, creating a visual conversation between what the border has been and what it is becoming.

La Frontera considers what it means to live alongside a boundary that has increasingly become militarized. The works explore themes of land, belonging, memory, resistance, environmental change, and the tension between preservation and development. An opening reception will be held on Friday, October 9, at 7 p.m. at 208 W. El Paso, Studio 6, in Marfa.

La Frontera

ART EXHIBITION OF THE BORDER
FUNDRAISER FOR NO BIG BEND WALL ORG

HANNAH GENTILES
BRIAN FINKE
JORDAN VONDERHAAR

NATALIE NEWMAN
YOLANDA ALVARADO
HILLARY PIERCE

opening reception

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7 PM

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ABEL MACIAS

LOS ANIMALES

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Opening Oct 8 5-7pm Exhibition Oct 8 - Dec 13

Naughty Santa: Will Boone and Randy Kennedy discuss their play *Red Gap*

On December 23, 1927, a man dressed as Santa Claus walked into the First National Bank of Cisco, Texas, and set off one of the most notorious crimes in Texas history – later resulting in a death by electric chair for one man and Santa’s hanging by an angry mob.

Marfa Public Radio is airing a reading of *Red Gap*, a play co-written by Will Boone and Randy Kennedy, which tells a story centered around this notorious Texas true-crime event of a 1927 bank robbery.

Multimedia artist Will Boone is currently a 2026 artist in residence at The Chinati Foundation. Randy Kennedy is a journalist and writer who was raised in the Texas Panhandle and worked on the staff of The New York Times for 25 years. He now edits *Ursula*, an arts focused magazine from Hauser & Wirth.

Editor Rob D’Amico sat down with Boone and Kennedy to discuss their play, the dark side of genealogy and their steadfast fascination with mythologized criminality.

I’d like to start with the simple stuff, like what’s your connection to Marfa, Randy?

Kennedy: I grew up near Lubbock in a really small town called Plains. And I remember at some point, I wasn’t yet writing about art for The New York Times, but at some point, I knew enough about art to know what Marfa was. During the holidays -- 2000 into 2001 -- I was home visiting my mother, and I said, “Hey, I want to go to this little art town.” We got up at four in the morning and drove to Marfa ... and I’ve been going with quite a bit of frequency ever since, for 25 years now. I interviewed Bob Irwin when he did his piece at Chinati, and I’ve done some speaking there. It’s one of my favorite places in the world.

And you, Will?

Boone: I grew up in Houston, so I guess I was in my early 20s, like around 2002, and I had met an artist there named Mark Flood in Houston. Mark had buddies out here who were artists, guys like Jeff Elrod and Rob Weiner, so we came out one time. Since I moved back to Texas about five years ago, I’ve been coming out more often. I guess to tie it into the play, Randy and I were sitting around at Planet Marfa and talking about our families – he was talking about growing up in Lubbock and I was talking about growing up in Houston – but my mom’s family is from Cotulla, Texas. They were cattle ranchers ... and we got to talking about the criminal elements of our family, like the dark side of our genealogy, and Randy brought up this story about the Santa Claus robbery.

Kennedy: Yeah, it was weird because there was no criminality in my family at all, but I’m adopted, and when I was in my twenties, I found my biological family on my mother’s side. My grandmother, Jane Thornton, was the family historian and she wrote me a series of letters about everything she knew, and she ended one letter, and she said, “In the next letter, I’m going to tell you about the black sheep of the family.” And she sent me a letter about this robbery.

And I had heard about that robbery when I was a kid; it was as famous in its era – which was the 30s, 40s, 50s – as Bonnie and Clyde. The Santa Claus robbery was such a notorious thing in West and Central Texas history.

Henry Helms, who was my first cousin many times removed, was one of the members of the gang that robbed the bank, and it turned very bloody and he was the guy who killed the sheriff, Bit Bedford, and then they were all caught and he was put to death in the electric chair in 1929. So I was like, “Holy cow,” you know, “I have a real one as far as bad guys in the family.”

Randy, before I get into the play more, tell me about what you wrote in your novel *Presidio*?

Kennedy: It’s about where I grew up. It’s about Llano Estacado, and it’s kind of about criminality too. It’s about a half-assed car thief who kind of has a nervous breakdown ... It was a book that I worked on for about 10 years, and it got a pretty good reception when it came out in 2018.

I think Will and I are both pretty interested in cops and robbers and violence and the under-culture and parts of American society that are not part of the mainstream.

And Will made an incredible film that’s called *Sweet Perfume*. That’s one of my favorite art movies, it’s incredible. And I think at some point, Will, you said, about the Santa Claus robbery, “I’m interested in doing something with it ... I really want to do a piece of theatre.” And I said, “Let’s try it.”

Boone: Yeah, I think the thing that I found really interesting about the idea was – because I’m not a theater guy and neither is Randy – sort of distilling this narrative into just dialogue, people talking about this robbery and to avoid kind of this action-style shootout kind of thing that would be depicted in the film.

I remember one time Randy and I were talking about when something like this happens, there’s the little old lady that gets interviewed on the news for 30 seconds, but what’s the rest of their life like? Like, how do they continue to talk about this kind of trauma that happens?

There was his heavy archetypal thing where the sheriff gets killed, the patriarch of the town, and then you have Santa Claus being lynched. There’s sort of like this double patricide thing that

feels like Greek tragedy or something.

Kennedy: And at the very beginning of the writing, Will said, “What if this thing happens over and over again?” It’s not just one robbery, it’s kind of a ritual slaughter. It’s a cyclical bloodletting, and that really structured it.

It ends up that most of the voices in it, you’re not sure if anybody’s still alive. It’s kind of the voices of ghosts and memories. Some of that came out of thinking about the novel *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo. You get about 20 pages into that novel, and you’re like, wait, is everybody dead? Everything that happens in this floats in a kind of a netherworld between the land of the living and the land of the dead, Some of it ended up being a lot funnier than we first thought.

That was going to be my next question, is there dark humor in this?

Boone: It’s definitely funny to us. There was another thing early on that I felt influenced it, and it’s this book called *The Violence and the Sacred* by this French guy, René Girard, and it’s sort of about the scapegoat ritual – when a trauma happens in a group of people, somebody must be blamed and basically sacrificed in order for everything to go back to normal – and so it’s sort of like, what if that just keeps happening? There’s parts where the guys are playing the bank robbery, and they’re listening to ZZ Top, and one of them’s snorting speed or something like that. So it’s not 1927, it kind of shifts around in time.

Kennedy: And you can’t figure out exactly where it is in time.

How long does it run? When you guys do this on public radio, how’s it gonna work?

Randy: When we timed it on stage – and again, we’re neophytes at theatre – it seemed to be about a 90-minute play without intermission.

Boone: And I think the recording is shorter than that, an hour and some change. There’s a particular character named Frances Blassingame ... and when we were in Marfa with Terry and Jo Harvey Allen, immediately we were just like, that’s Jo Harvey. We were writing it with her as our kind of dream person, but also just the inspiration for the character. Rob Weiner hosted a reading at his home in Marfa early on, so it was important for us to circle back and work with Rob and the people that he works with in his theater projects in Marfa.

We’ve been recording a big chunk of the play here at the radio station in off hours with the guy from the liquor store, artists and musicians, just people from Marfa, to, in one way, pay respects to this place but also to bring this into a bigger collaborative thing. We wanted people who I think would understand the story in a different kind of way.

Kennedy: And it also plugs into the history of radio plays. I was listening to *Gunsmoke*, which was a radio series before it was on television. There’s this great history of radio plays with a narrator, music, sound effects, performances. Which is a rich history and it’s pretty cool to think about. I love the idea of this play, which becomes pretty surreal and David Lynchian in passages, being heard on radios all up and down the Big Bend.

Will, tell me what we can expect from your exhibition at the Chinati Foundation?

Boone: Well, a good chunk of my time I’m spending on the play because I’m editing the whole thing. But I am going to have an open studio as a part of Chinati Weekend, and I’m showing a group of paintings that I’ve been working on here that are not necessarily related to the *Red Gap* project; they’re kind of inspired by lifetime ranch gates – those gates that you can buy at agricultural supply stores. They’re kind of these minimalist paintings. It’s a different project that I’m working on simultaneously.

So what’s next for y’all? Randy, what are you doing next in life?

Kennedy: I’m the editor-in-chief of an art magazine called *Ursula*, and I’ve been working on a second novel now for a few years. It’s loosely based on a real historical artist named Martin Ramirez, who was a guy who came from Jalisco in the 1930s and went to the Sacramento Valley and got arrested because he probably had some sort of psychotic break. And then he was in a mental hospital for the rest of his life; he made some of the greatest artwork of the 20th century, hands down.

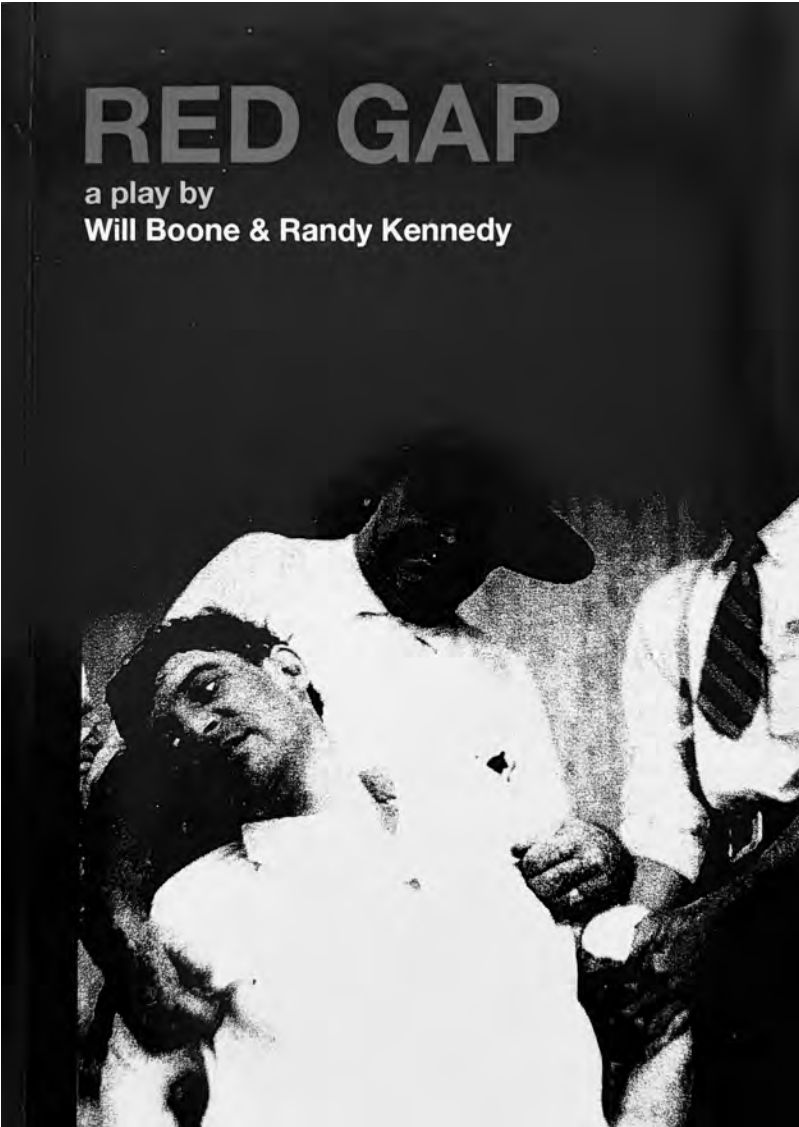
And Will, what’s up with you? When does your Chinati residency end?

Boone: I’m here through the end of October. I’ve been working on an exhibition that’s gonna open in LA at a gallery called Karma in February. We’re doing this radio play, but I kind of see this project as having different permutations, you know? We’re thinking about putting this onto a record and releasing it. I’ve been doing, over the last four years, tons of drawings of ideas for sets and paintings operating as backdrops and sculptures as props. I hope to have an exhibition in the next couple of years that maybe would be activated by a performance of the play.

Kennedy: If you get a chance, come to the talk on Friday with Nate Freeman from *Vanity Fair* about the play. We’re gonna have some visuals that show the images and things we were exchanging when we were writing it. It’s going to be an unusual art talk.

Marfa Public Radio is airing a reading of Red Gap on Friday, October 9, at 11 p.m. Locals are invited to gather at the station to listen or tune in on marfapublicradio.org

The Crowley Theatre presents Will Boone and Randy Kennedy in conversation moderated by Nate Freeman on Friday, October 9, at 3:30 p.m. The talk is free and open to all.



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"We cannot direct the wind,
but we can adjust the sails." - Dolly

What’s that on the hill?

The Beautiful Chloë monolith piques the curiosity of remote travelers in Casa Piedra

By Rob D’Amico

Down a dusty deserted desert road, she stands. The Beautiful Chloë. Naked and alone, her figure graces two sides of a monolith towering toward the sky atop a small hill in Casa Piedra, but who will ever see her?

It’s fall of 2024, and Rusty Martin pours two liquor bottles into a margarita machine struggling to keep pace with the partygoers’ demands. The ice is gone, but the drinkers go ahead and wince at sips from the machine filled with straight liquor. The celebratory atmosphere does not change, though, with the diminished ice, as these invitees have a rare chance to view *The Beautiful Chloë* up close. It’s a 20-foot-tall monolith that paints an image of a famous actress through the use of thousands of small pieces of glass. Eighteen different shades of gray – along with some stray browns in the tiles – reproduce a famous photo of the woman in the nude from both front and back as she stands in a pose holding her hair.

The partygoers were there for a view on its completion. But the invite came with a caveat: Taking images for personal viewing was fine, but absolutely nothing could be shared on social media. I was invited but told I couldn’t write a story about it – yet.

The work is the brainchild of Marfa filmmakers Rusty Martin and Susan Kirr. “We wanted our audience to be people that just by chance encountered seeing it from the road,” Kirr said. And “by chance” is something that is almost a given. Casa Piedra – a once thriving farming community through the early 1900s about an hour southeast of Marfa – is now just a handful of hardy desert denizens. Casa Piedra Road abuts Big Bend Ranch State Park and begins as a paved Highway 169, 7 miles south of Marfa, but then winds into a rocky, sandy, sometimes treacherous (when it rains) road south to Highway 170.

On recent trips to Martin and Kirr’s land, I only encountered one other vehicle on the 43-mile trip there and the same on the way back. To see *The Beautiful Chloë*, perched about a quarter of a mile behind the couple’s barbed wire fence, takes a look just at the right moment. And even then, many motorists report that it looks like a figure of some sort, but they aren’t sure of what.

Martin said a partial inspiration for his work was the triangular stainless-steel pillar that showed up in a remote red rock canyon in southeastern Utah in November 2020, followed by other mystery monoliths, most of which disappeared shortly after they were discovered. But a larger driving force for him was to create something that’s there to be there. “They call it ‘MOOP’ at Burning Man, which is ‘matter out of place,’” Martin says. He’s trying to give a bit of history while gazing at the monolith as a stiff, cool wind blows across the hilltop where it stands. You can see miles in all directions at that height.

As for the model, Martin just found her photos rather unique because they include a front side and a back side perfect for a monolith. The idea of a nude came from a neighbor who admitted hiking barefoot and nude down a creek through their property.

The sculpture’s remoteness is intentional, as Martin and Kirr pondered even putting it in a creek – although they realized it likely would wash away. “I don’t need your likes,” Martin says. “I don’t want your likes on Instagram. It’s just the endeavor of doing it. I love the process.”

That process took a lot of planning. The mosaic would be mounted on a steel frame 20 feet tall and 8 feet wide, weighing in at almost two tons. Artaic, a custom tile fabricator, rendered the two photographs into three-fourth-inch mosaic glass, using 18 shades of gray.

Each tile became a single pixel in design. Martin and Kirr



enlisted a team of talent in 2022 to help with the work. The tile arrived in April 2024

“It took about three months to secure the mosaic glass squares to the concrete board on the steel frame,” Kirr said.

Rusty, along with Jerik Gilly, affixed the mosaic tile to the structure. Carolyn Macartney, who was a local Marfa sign painter, was in charge of keeping all the lines straight.

Moving back and forth from one side of the frame to the other, she made sure each square foot of tile went into the right place.

The tile was then grouted, sanded and sealed. A layer of sealer also went across the top of the piece.

The sculpture was finished in June 2024.

Rob D’Amico, Susan Kirr, and Rusty Martin discuss the creative and technical process of creating the monolith.

- The team project team included:**
Rusty Martin, artist
Susan Kirr, project manager
Bobby Crockett, consultant
Jerik Gilly, fabricator and mosaic installation
Nathan Kandus, design drawings
Dan Ray, structural engineer
Carolyn Macartney, director of lines and placement
Mark Morrison, cement work

Photos by Jennifer Pittinger



Mosaic tiles in 18 shades of gray (along with a bit of brown) were used to reproduce the photo.

Hetzler | Marfa

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Rinus Van de Velde, *Coverstory* | *Antelope Hills Road* | © 2026 Rinus Van de Velde. Photo: del image



Richard Long, Sea Lava Circles, 1988, Marfa

Richard Long's *ROCKS RIVER* set for Chinati Weekend

British conceptual artist will hold exhibition, talk

Richard Long, a British conceptual artist, will be a highlight of Chinati Weekend with an open exhibition and talk from the artist about his groundbreaking work in Britain and beyond.

Early on, Long’s work – including sculpture, drawings and text – focused on land art, the use of natural materials like mud, rocks and grass, often with installations in plein air. That expanded over the years to galleries and other spaces, but the foundation for his work is walking. A prodigious walker, Long covered several contents, walking hundreds of miles, for his inspiration.

As the Guardian wrote in an interview with Long: “Long’s art is hugely evocative on many levels. His elemental forms feel familiar to people, whether they’re a cross in a meadow formed by pulling the heads off daisies or a circle of boulders left in a high mountain pass. They seem to echo the primal traces left by ancient cultures: the vast ‘ground drawings,’ created by Indigenous Peruvians or Britain’s Neolithic stone monuments.”

Or as Long says in his own words: “A balance between the patterns of nature and the formalism of human, abstract ideas like lines and circles. It is where my human characteristics meet the natural forces and patterns of the world – that is the subject of my work.”

The Chinati Foundation will present ROCKS RIVER, an exhibition of new work by Long, who Donald Judd once described as “the best in Europe.” Judd installed Long’s work Sea Lava Circles (1988) – Icelandic lava stones placed in an arrangement of three concentric circles – on a concrete platform, formerly a tennis court, adjacent to Chinati’s Arena. This is the first exhibition dedicated to new work by Long in the foundation’s 40-year history.

Since the mid-1960s, Long has been celebrated internationally for works that incorporate, in a variety of combinations, walking, photographs, text, and common environmental materials like stones, mud, and water. Long’s seminal A Line Made by Walking, 1967, consists of a walk along a line of indeterminate length and duration, resulting in a photograph of lightly flattened grass. With this work, and others of the period, Long introduced new questions to the language of sculpture, performance, and documentation, with which artists and art historians still grapple. For his upcoming exhibition at Chinati, Long pursues an artmaking practice which, while fundamentally consistent in its materials and methods, often involves universal entities such as lines and circles. As he said in a 2020 interview with the Brooklyn Rail, “Every walk is about a different idea.”

Following the opening, a series of related public programs will take place throughout late 2026 and 2027. Details about these events will be shared in the coming months. The exhibition schedule includes:

Saturday, October 10
Exhibition opening
Champagne toast and remarks – 10:15 a.m.

Talk
Richard Long followed by a conversation with Sir Nicholas Serota
Crowley Theater, 98 S. Austin St. – 2 p.m.

Sunday, October 11
Open viewing – 10 a.m.–1 p.m.



Richard Long's installations often were inspired by long walks.

BALLROOM MARFA

Fall 2026

All programs are free and open to all

RAVEN HALFMOON

May 1–October 11: *Flags of Our Mothers*
Ballroom Marfa Gallery, 108 E San Antonio St
Wednesday-Saturday 11 AM-6 PM, Sunday 11 AM-3 PM

SKY HOPINKA

September 26–October 23: Selected short films, 50-minute loop beginning at sunset
Bull Room, 43326 Ranch Rd 1112
Nightly, 8-10 PM

ANDREW DURBIN

October 24: Book reading and discussion between writer Eileen Myles and Durbin about his new dual biography, *The Wonderful World That Almost Was: A Life of Peter Hujar and Paul Thek*
Bull Room, 43326 Ranch Rd 1112
Doors 6 PM, Reading 6:30 PM

RAINER JUDD

November 27: A reading from, *I Saw the Sun*, an introspective debut collection of poems
Bull Room, 43326 Ranch Rd 1112
Doors 7 PM, Reading 7:30 PM

JO HARVEY ALLEN

November 28: A one-woman show with stories, poems, and songs, based on her play and book *Homerun*
Bull Room, 43326 Ranch Rd 1112
Doors 7 PM, Performance 7:30 PM

Contact Us

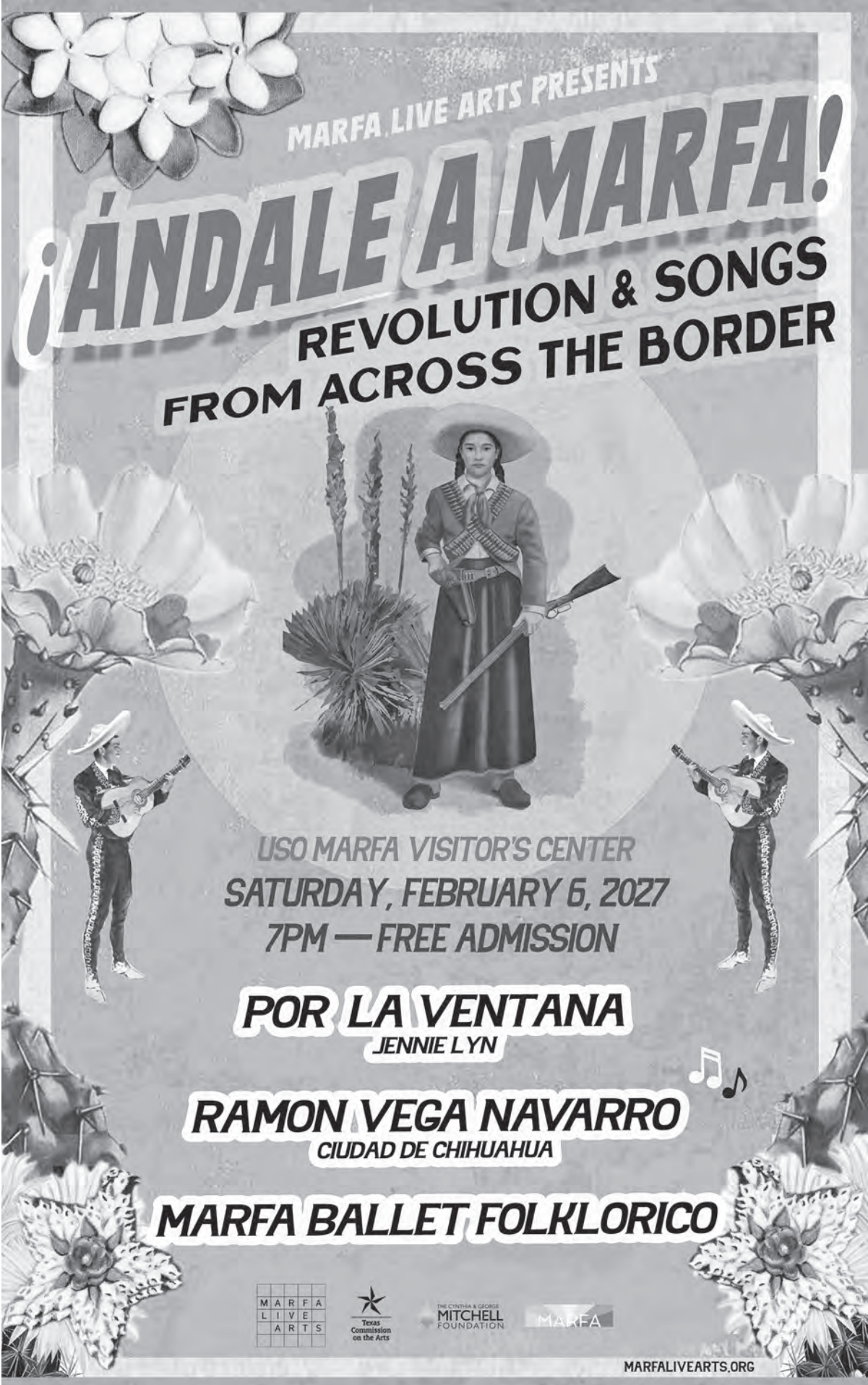
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MARFA LIVE ARTS PRESENTS

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7PM — FREE ADMISSION

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CHINATI WEEKEND 2026



Richard Long, *Sea Lava Circles*, 1988. The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, on long-term loan from Judd Foundation. Photo by Alex Marks courtesy The Chinati Foundation. © 2026 Richard Long. All rights reserved. DACS, London / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

All events are free and open to the public. Seating is available on a first come, first served basis where applicable.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

Talk

Will Boone and Randy Kennedy
in conversation, moderated by
Nate Freeman
Crowley Theater, 98 S. Austin St.
3:30 p.m.

Open Studio

Artist in Residence Will Boone
Locker Plant, 135 E. Oak St.
5–7 p.m.

Music

Performance by Sharon Van Etten
Crowley Theater, 98 S. Austin St.
8 p.m. doors
9 p.m. performance

Partner Event

MarfaMUST Open Studios
Open studios throughout Marfa. Discover
participating artists at marfamust.org
Follow @marfamust for updates.
9 a.m.–3 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Open viewing

Chinati’s collection
Chinati Foundation, 1 Cavalry Row
10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Artmaking

Free and open to all ages and skill levels,
materials provided
Chinati Art Lab
10 a.m.–noon

Exhibition opening

Richard Long: *ROCKS RIVER*
Chinati Foundation, 1 Cavalry Row
Champagne toast and remarks
10:15 a.m.

Talk

Richard Long followed by a conversation
with Sir Nicholas Serota
Crowley Theater, 98 S. Austin St.
2 p.m.

Talk

A conversation on the writings of artists
Donald Judd, Robert Rauschenberg,
and Jack Whitten with Mirsini Amidon,
Rainer Judd, Caitlin Murray, and Francine
Snyder, moderated by Randy Kennedy
Crowley Theater, 98 S. Austin St.
3:30 p.m.
*Copresented by the Robert Rauschenberg
Foundation*

After party

Easy Sevens with Will Boone
Wild Mare, 306 E. San Antonio St.
9:30 p.m.

Partner Events

MarfaMUST Open Studios
9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Judd Foundation Open Hours
Whyte Building and Cobb House
104 W. Oak St.
10 a.m.–noon

MarfaMUST Group Exhibition —
Opening Reception
A group exhibition featuring artists
working across Marfa
Noon–2 p.m.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

Open viewing

Chinati’s collection and
Richard Long: *ROCKS RIVER*
Chinati Foundation, 1 Cavalry Row
10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Artmaking

Free and open to all ages and skill levels,
materials provided
Chinati Art Lab
10 a.m.–noon

Partner Events

MarfaMUST Open Studios
9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Judd Foundation Open Hours
Whyte Building and Cobb House
104 W. Oak St.
10 a.m.–noon



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