



My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols

by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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The year is coming to a close and the holidays are fast approaching. Have a fun and safe holiday season!

Here are five things happening around your state:

1. Texas still number one for domestic in-migration

Last year, Texas again was the number one destination for Americans moving to another state, according to State-to-State Migration Flows data from the Census Bureau. The most significant migration flows occurred between Texas and other high-population states, like California and Florida, and geographically close states, like Oklahoma and Colorado. People moving from California, New York, and Oregon represented the highest net gains for Texas. There were some losses for Texas, though at a much smaller scale. States including South Carolina and Rhode Island saw net gains from Texas. Texas has been one of the fastest-growing states over the past several years. Continued population growth helps drive economic growth and development as well. Texas remains an attractive place for people to move because of our strong economy, abundance of opportunity, and low taxes.

2. Carbon capture in concrete makes concrete stronger

New and creative efforts to reduce our carbon footprint are on the horizon, and this one is particularly strong. It's referred to as "green concrete," which uses a method of injecting captured carbon dioxide into concrete as it's being mixed. The result is stronger concrete, less cement used, and a reduction in carbon emissions. Once the concrete is injected with carbon dioxide, the compound will never be released, even if the project is destroyed. Industry continues to develop new and innovative ways to reduce carbon emissions.

3. Battleship Texas may have found its new home

The Battleship Texas, one of the most historic battleships in US history having served in both World War I and II, is currently in Galveston undergoing much-needed repairs. The ship was previously located near the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. However, as the ship's condition deteriorated, a bill was passed to fund the repairs. In August of 2022, the ship moved to Galveston, and a plan is underway to dock it in Galveston permanently. The City of Galveston

and the Port of Galveston Board of Trustees recently agreed to develop a lease proposal for the USS Texas. The agreement would still need approval from the US Coast Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers, and an agreement with the Galveston-Texas City Pilots. The Battleship Texas Foundation is also working on an agreement with Landry's, an organization with world-class operational, entertainment, and hospitality expertise, to enhance the Battleship Texas experience. Meanwhile, the restoration process has shifted to the second phase, titled "Bring Her Home!" This phase is focused on creating an enriching visitor experience with emphasis on restoring 60 spaces with interactive and technology-driven exhibits, guided tours, and other visitor amenities. Saving the Battleship Texas has been an ongoing passion project of mine and I am happy to see things progressing smoothly with the restoration.

4. General Land Office approves \$48.5M for DETCOG regional mitigation

The GLO announced the approval of over \$48 million in new regional mitigation funds for eight projects in the DETCOG service area. The infrastructure projects vary including improving water facilities, streets, and roadside drainage systems, and construction of public community resource centers and shelters. Three East Texas counties have communities receiving funds – Newton, Polk, and Tyler. Newton County is receiving over \$13 million to construct a new community center and shelter and the City of Newton is receiving over \$2.5 million for water and sewer improvements. In Polk County, Onalaska and Livingston are receiving funds for street improvements, while the county received a total of around \$17 million for water facilities, street, and drainage system improvements and road and water control systems improvements at three plants. Lastly, Tyler County is receiving almost \$12 million for drainage, water, and street improvements and a Colmesneil area emergency generator. All these projects are federally eligible and are funded with federal dollars.

5. School districts begin receiving school safety grants

During the regular session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 30, the supplemental appropriations bill. That bill included \$1.1 billion for school safety initiatives, mostly focused on improving infrastructure at Texas schools. Before session began, TEA drafted updated facilities standards for existing school district campuses. These updated facilities requirements are anticipated to be paid for largely by the \$1.1 billion appropriation. Districts filled out a survey regarding how compliant their existing facilities were with the updated requirements. Those surveys served as the basis for the grants awarded and the amount each district received.

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