

Viewpoint

The Jasper Newsboy

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Our Viewpoint Editorials

Always thankful for Jasper's giving spirit

WITH TIME, some of the memories of just one short year ago begin to dim if ever so slightly. In that period since the historic experience of Hurricane Rita, there have been many positive developments. It is those events that are foremost in the minds of Jasper Countians and East Texans as the nature of humans is to dwell more on what's at hand than what is past.

While area residents who experienced Rita are not likely to ever forget it, those subsequent events that move us forward after the unprecedented devastation provide a positive mood that assists in advancing the area through a "down" time.

A year ago, East Texans were giving thanks for surviving the storm and its devastation. Rita is still fresh enough on every mind to keep that thankfulness near

the top of a Thanksgiving list. But much has happened in the year subsequent to Rita to lengthen the list of blessings.

The past 14 months necessarily produced much in the way of rebuilding, repairing and refurbishing in the Rita aftermath. From that came a significant retail boom that has bolstered the economic well-being of Jasper and Jasper County.

Blessings subsequent to the storm embrace and emphasize something that is truly definitive of Jasperites — an irreplaceable bent toward survival and the wits and tools to do so, plus an unshakable determination to help and comfort those in dire need.

That Jasper-East Texas spirit can always be at the top, or at least always near there, on any list of thanksgiving in the season or at any other time. It defines this area's residents.

Let us be thankful.

In Jasper County

Pride for D.A.R.E.



Newsboy photo/Sharon Kerr

D.A.R.E. OFFICER Wanda Brister and Jasper Police Department Chief Todd Hunter beam proudly at a D.A.R.E. graduation in the Jasper Independent School District (see related photos and story in this issue).

Capital Highlights

A summary of the week's significant events in Austin

Lawmakers file 318 bills on Lege's first filing day

AUSTIN — Early filing of legislation for the 80th regular session of the Texas Legislature has begun.

Some of the 181 members of the Texas Legislature (150 in the House and 31 in the Senate) got right to it, filing 318 pieces of legislation on Nov. 13, the first day they could put a bill in the hopper.

Lawmakers file about 10,000 bills in a regular, 140-day legislative session. It isn't a race to see who can file the most bills, but a few lawmakers are off to a quick start.

Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Grapevine, led the pack on day one by filing 29 bills. Then came Sen. Judith Zaffirini, D-Laredo, with 21. In the House, big filers were State Reps. Dan Branch, R-Dallas, and Richard Raymond, D-Laredo, with 17 bills each.

A sampling of subjects among the 318 early-filed bills:

- health care, prisons, crime, taxes;
- education, campaign contribution limits, raising the minimum wage;
- defibrillator, seatbelts, road signs and neck wear.

That's right: neck wear. Rep. Armando "Mando" Martinez, D-Weslaco, filed a resolution designating the bolo tie as the official State Tie of Texas.

Nelson, Branch, Sens. Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, D-Laredo, Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio, and Rep. Hubert Vo, D-Houston, each filed bills requiring schools to have an automated external defibrillator ready to use in case anyone goes into cardiac arrest at extra-curricular athletic events.

Republicans and Democrats apparently agree on the need for defibrillators, but the chronic tension between the two parties is as strong as ever.

Speaker Tom Craddick, R-Midland, is seeking another term to preside over the Texas House. While he has dissenters, Craddick claims to have pledges for more than the 76 votes he will need to remain as speaker. Sixty-nine of the 150 members of the House are Democrats.

An effort is brewing to back someone other than Craddick for the high post. Supporting Democrats hold together, it would take at least seven sympathetic

Republicans to bring on another speaker.

The legislative session opens Tuesday, Jan. 9, and the bill-filing deadline is 60 days later.

Writers call for end to lobby team

With Democrats coming into Congressional power in January and a "lame-duck" session in progress, Gov. Rick Perry's tax dollar-funded GOP lobbyists won't have the punch they once enjoyed at the U.S. Capitol under Republican control.

The Austin American-Statesman and other newspapers have called for an end to funding for those lobbyists, some of whom were associates or employees of criminally convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff and indicted former U.S. Rep. and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay.

Official says utility bills too high

Jim Scogin, director of the Texas Council on Competitive Government, says the state's \$200 million a year utility bill is too high.

The council has contracted with LPB Energy of Dallas to audit state agencies' energy-use and bookkeeping related to it, to look for ways to conserve energy use and to shop for better rates.

The goal is to cut the state's energy bill by 25 percent.

Senator to file smoking ban bill

Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, said he plans to file legislation to create a "Texas Smoke-free Workplace Law" banning smoking at all work sites and in all public places. Ellis made the announcement in conjunction with the 30th annual Great American Smokeout on Nov. 17.

Landmark bridge to be renamed

The Austin City Council voted to rename Congress Avenue Bridge the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge in honor of the late governor who died Sept. 13.

The city placed a plaque on the bridge Nov. 16 and the official christening will take place later.

Hurricane aid near \$1 billion

Texas residents who suffered damage from Hurricane Rita in September 2005 have been approved to receive more than \$984 million in disaster assistance, including grants from FEMA and low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Ed Sterling is director of member services for the Texas Press Association.



Ed Sterling
Texas Press Association

Your Viewpoint Letters to the Editor

Veterans' Day pleases James

By ROY A. JAMES
Jasper

It is with great pleasure and appreciation that I write this letter to tell you how grateful I am for your participation and contribution to the "Enhancement Project" for the Veterans Memorial in downtown Jasper.

The dedication ceremony was truly a special day for all veterans, military personnel, their families and those citizens who attended. The Military Honors given to the memorial have truly created a sacred place in which to reflect and pay tribute to those who have served this nation in the armed forces.

It is most gratifying to me personally, that a 'can do,' 'need to' and 'want to' spirit and attitude is alive and well among our local businesses and private citizens to move forward visionary projects that have merit and reflects well on our community as a whole.

It has always been my belief that we have a personal responsibility and obligation to contribute to the betterment of one's community, always looking for ways to bring additional pride and honor to a place we call home. This notion and its subsequent actions by citizens only further add to the overall quality of life for all who live here and come to visit.

So, let me say in closing that your participation and support for this honorable endeavor is most appreciated, and I believe will bring honor and pride to Jasper for generations to come. I trust that your participation will continue to bless you and give you great joy.

Thanks for the great coverage.

City represented at other Vet Day

By JEAN PACE
Jasper

This is in response to Sam Ketchum's letter in last week's Newsboy. On Friday, Nov. 10, a memorial service was held on the campus of Jasper Junior High School (formerly Jasper High School). This service was a rededication of 18 markers honoring men who had attended Jasper High School and lost their lives during World War II.

Through the efforts of Dianne Pace, an elected city official, and others at the school, these markers were saved and replaced in a prominent place in front of the building. They were originally laid in 1946 in memory of these men. Some had been destroyed or buried but after about a year's efforts and help from David Schultz with Forest Oaks Funeral Home, they were all gathered and placed in a more prominent place of honor.

That service was also a very touching ceremony. It was attended by all students of the school. I don't know what Sam Ketchum looks like, but I'm almost positive he was not there.

Several city officials left their businesses

on a workday to attend the service. Nov. 10 was a paid holiday for county employees, but I don't recall seeing an elected county official in attendance. It was publicized in the media, but they must have had more important things to do.

As the mother of Dianne Pace, I know that she has a standing obligation on the second Saturday of each month and as great a person as she is, she cannot be in two places at one time.

County officials make salaries and very good benefits; elected city officials do not. Some run businesses and work six days a week. Sam Ketchum, whoever he is, should be ashamed of himself for being a puppet for people who have an agenda to get rid of the current elected city council and the mayor by a small group of people who have their own personal agenda.

Any memorial done for the men and women who have fought for this country is very important. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice should be honored by all. They should never be used as some kind of political statement.

Letter was aimed at mayor, council

By BILL RICHARDSON
Jasper

In his letter to the editor last week, Sam Ketchum made a good mouthpiece for the people whose agenda is to replace the mayor and current city council members so they can get control of spending public dollars again.

To suggest that families of veterans were disappointed because elected city council members didn't close their business doors to attend Roy James' memorial service to veterans, is another attempt to find any and everything to criticize elected city officials.

What better person to represent the people who are looking for handouts than Sam Ketchum, a man who flew into town on wings of Explorer Aircraft. He speaks for John Matthews, Roy James, Tom McClurg and the Chamber of Commerce board who think they are entitled to hotel/motel tax dollars.

Call it whatever you want, it's all about money. These people want their "friends" on city council so they can control public dollars to spend on their pet projects. They don't fool anybody.

Senators against minimum wage

By MICHAEL DOGGETT
Port Arthur

I am writing concerning a very important issue. I recently contacted both Texas U.S. Senators concerning minimum wage. The response I received was very discouraging.

I wrote why I felt an increase was needed for minimum wage workers. The response I received from both Senators was:

"Heaven goes by favour. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in."

— Mark Twain

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