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## Capital Capital Highlights Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association

Judge rules against school ago. finance system...

to provide substantially equal County state district court declared on Feb. 4.

Judge John K. Dietz ruled in the lawsuit brought by nearly 700 school districts (as Texans for Real Efficiency and Equity in Education), three individual school districts, a group of intervenors and a charter school costate board of education.

against the officials was inaddistricts forced to tax at the cap discretion" in setting their tax rates, Dietz wrote.

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst immediate appeal of the ruling to the Texas Supreme Court.

Last session of the Texas voted to cut education funding by about \$5.5 billion, part of an across-the-board effort to to compensate for a budget shortfall then calculated to be between \$10 billion and \$24 to those cuts made two years industry leaders.

AUSTIN — Texas' cur- funding formulas repeatedly marketing blitz, Perry invited rent school finance system fails have been addressed in highprofile cases by state courts access to revenues needed to since the mid-1980s. Texans provide "a general diffusion of for Real Efficiency and Equity knowledge" in accordance with in Education's published goal "is the state constitution, a Travis not asking the court to legislate a solution to this problem, but rather to force the Legislature to do their job in creating a constitutional public school system."

Cancer agency questioned Texas in November 2007 responded to a call by the governor to create an entity that would focus on finding cures alition. Named as defendants in and preventive measures for the lawsuit are the commissioner cancer. It was then that votof education, the state comptrol- ers approved a constitutional ler of public accounts and the amendment to establish a state agency, the Cancer Prevention Major among complaints and Research Institute of Texas, and allowed the issuance of equate state funding to augment \$3 billion in general obligation local property tax levies. School bonds over 10 years to fund it.

Last year, questions arose of \$1.17 on the \$100 valuation, over the cancer agency's manin essence, have been asked agement and where the money to do too much with too little, was going. Gov. Rick Perry, the Agency will suspend the therefore losing "meaningful Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and assignment of accreditation sta-Speaker Joe Straus on Dec. 19 sent a letter to the agency, call- year," Williams said. ing for it to address "concerns reacted, saying he expects an that have been raised about its processes and operations before on Feb. 8 set Saturday, March any future grants are awarded."

Cancer agency officials testi-Legislature, in 2011, lawmakers fied in a daylong hearing before the House Appropriations Committee on Feb. 6, answering questions about grant managesalaries, and more.

Perry takes California trip

Gov. Perry traveled to San billion. Today, however, the cur- Francisco, Silicon Valley, Los rent estimate by the comptroller Angeles and Orange County indicates a multi-billion-dollar on a three-day mission to meet budget surplus. Educators hope with high tech, biotechnology, to recoup billions in funding lost financial, insurance and film Carol Alvarado, D-Houston.

In a pre-trip "California Complaints about school regulates ... Texas innovates" California businesses to relocate in the Lone Star State.

Perry's office said Texas-One, an economic development corporation based in Austin, is paying for the trip and no tax dollars would be used for the governor's travel or accommo-

Accreditation must wait

Education Commissioner Michael L. Williams announced Feb. 7 the Texas Education Agency will not assign its normal annual accreditation statuses to the more than 1,200 independent school districts and charter schools for the 2012-2013 school year.

"Because student performance is a key indicator in the state accreditation system, and because that data is not available due to the transition (to the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) accountability system), tuses until the 2013-2014 school

Senate seat vote is set

Gov. Perry by proclamation 2 — Texas Independence Day — as the special runoff election date for the Texas Senate Dist. 6 seat held by the Hon. Mario Gallegos Jr., who died Oct. 16.

Gallegos, though deceased, reduce state agency spending ment, property leases, executive still won 71 percent of the vote to Republican challenger R.W. Bray's 29 percent in the Nov. 6

general election. Included among eight candidates in the race to serve out the term ending in 2016 are Bray and standing state Rep.



AXIS of EVIL UPDATE

## Paper 'n down to the river...

By Lynn Brisendine

Thirty people were crushed to death in a human stampede which took place last weekend in India. It was a tragedy, one which occurred far, far away. I glanced at the headline and decided to read a little of the lengthy story following.

And that's when I read an incredible statistic about what was going on where people panicking were in such numbers that so many were actually killed in the moving crowd.

The numbers were estimated to be an astonishing 30 million. The article in Monday's New York Times contained an amazing paragraph..."The pilgrims came, millions upon millions of them, in the greatest tide of humanity ever seen. Again and again, the vast crowds threatened to press too close, to trample the smallest. Then it happened.

All of this got this West Texas kid to thinking about large crowds, at least for me they seemed large and I came up with a couple of football games, one at Tech which probably saw 65,000 in attendance, and one at UT where the crowd

Both of those events paled when I considered the July Fourth Celebration my family was privileged to attend in Washington, D.C. The event which ended with a huge fireworks display over the Washington Monument saw the milling crowd entertained by the Philadelphia Philharmonic accompanying Pearl Bailey. It was in 1989 and I began my next week's column with..."I along with 500,000 of my closest friends were entertained...

The crowd was vast. The Mall, a huge space covering over two miles long and several hundred yards wide, was covered from one end to the other. Riding into the area on the Metro was a crowded experience which saw the massive numbers leave in a pretty controlled fashion.

It was a lot of people. Comparing that with what happened in India last week, and continues for the next few weeks, it would be 60 times more people last weekend in India, with more to come as the event transpires.

Folks in the know think that more than 100 million Indians will make the pilgrimage to bathe in the Ganges River. The believers in the ritual cleansing think it not only protects and blesses the person taking the bath, but his existing family and his progeny for generations.

A quick look at some internet postings give other events where masses of humans have trekked. The really large numbers seem to involve some kind of religious experience and they are..."An estimated 30 million people visited the Maha Kumbh Mela on 10th February 2013 and an estimated 100 million are expected to visit the place during the festival spread over 55 days.

"An estimated 25 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2013.

"An estimated 15 to 18 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2012.

"An estimated 15 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2011.

"An estimated 15 million people attended the funeral of C. N. Annadurai in Tamil Nadu, India in

"An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een in 2010

"An estimated 10 to 14 million people visited the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during

Other events which have drawn some hefty

attendance include..

The Tour de France cycle race - the number of spectators at recent events is estimated to be 12 to 15 million. Many other cycle races and similar events will have huge number of spectators. This number is the aggregate number of spectators over the whole three week event, but still phenomenal numbers.

The Indianapolis 500 has an estimated crowd of 400,000 attend. They also report big crowds at the Daytona 500 and Le Mans events.

Maracana stadium had a record attendance of 199,854 for the Brazil vs. Uruguay match in the World Cup Final of 1950, on the 16th of June. This is the biggest attendance at a sporting event held in an enclosed stadium. The crowd number is an unofficial number - the official crowd (people who paid tickets) that day was 173,850. Due to its large capacity, Maracana stadium has many more reported sporting events with large attendance figures.

"190,000 attended the 2nd day of a 2-day Pro Wrestling event at the May Day Stadium on the 29th of April 1995. The headline act was "Nature Boy" Ric Flair."

A pro wrestling event stands among the record breakers in this country. Go figure. The information also included a report concerning an ancient event... It found a reference to more than 300 000 people at an event in Circus Maximus (Rome) a few years BC. (unconfirmed!)

Entertainment venues have also seen large groups in attendance. Like the annual Fourth bash on the Mall, some others have also been well attended including...

'New York Philharmonic in Central Park 1986 [800,000]. The largest classical concert that celebrated the rededication of the Statue of Liberty.

Even those numbers were basically insignificant to one of my favorite entertainers who packed them into his show, just not on these

"Rod Stewart at Copacabana Beach 1994 [3,500,000]. A New Year's celebration featuring Rod Stewart with the largest concert crowd ever. The wonderful Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil was overcrowded with a singing and celebrating audience.'

When one begins to consider the tremendous pressure put on an existing infrastructure, the idea of a few million guests seems overwhelming. Where do 30 million people use the restroom facilities and how can any city have the hotels or other beds available?

Apparently, the beds available are furnished in a huge tent city constructed as needed. The article states that the tent city is on the banks of the river and its inhabitants have access to drinking water, public toilets, good health care and consistent electricity. As an aside, it also says that these amenities are usually pretty scarce all over India all the time.

It goes on to say that 70,000 employees are on site to sweep up a huge mess, spray insecticides in an effort to curb plagues and maintain

In one example, the article says that the encampment of pilgrims in just one day last week would be like everyone in Texas visiting an area the size of Savannah, Ga. They expected 30 million more by Monday, Feb. 11.

For me, the crowd in a movie theater can be too many at times. Millions upon millions, I just can't begin to imagine.

## Wright Words

By Dustin Wright

Sentinel Managing Editor Being a homegrown product of

our community, I can't help but be an ambassador -- a cheerleader if vou will -- for Seminole. I've had opportunities to get out

of town, explore other options, but Seminole is home. It's where my family is. It's where I want my son raised. It's where my heart is.

With that being said, I must state we are a crucial point in our town's history -- where do we want our future to take us?

Our economy is bustling, thanks in part to the booming activity in the oil fields of Gaines County, West Texas and the southeastern New Mexico region.

We are on the edge of a developing "Energyplex" boon within our immediate region, where nuclear energies, waste disposal and wind technologies are joining the ranks of agriculture and petroleum as "go-to" industries of trade.

We're at a point where we, as a community -- as one -- need to step forward and begin investing in our future.

Or else, we can sit back and wait for what we thought would be "the impossible" happen to our community. Much like our counterparts in the Plainview community.

"The impossible" for that community came in the form of a haulting of operations at it's Cargill beef cattle processing center, where some 2,000 jobs ceased to be in place as of Feb. 1, due to the crippling drought conditions experienced in our region for the past several years.

Two thousand jobs -- 2,000 -which amounts to a good chunk of that community's workforce who were forced to relocate to other communities, or worse, begin the drasitc search for new jobs in new industries.

In no way am I saying the Plainview community ever planned for the Cargill plant to just up and stop operations. But, if such planning was in place, it still does not truly prepare a community for such a drastic blow.

But, many in the Plainview community are currently wondering "what's going to happen next?" "Where do we go from here?" "Where do we begin to pick up the pieces?'

I'd hate to see our community go through a similar situation.

We've seen our share of ups-anddowns here in the West Texas oil patch, where we "rock-n-roll" during the good times and wonder "what's going to happen next" during the

Seminole is in a unique situation when compared to many others in our region.

We have the benefits of being able to support our community through jobs in both the agriculture and petroleum industries, which has been the staple of our local economy for over a century in some instances.

But what would we ever do if we had a similar situation happen here locally, as it did just a few short weeks ago in Plainview? It's time we, as citizens of our com-

munity, step up and begin working toward our future and preparing for the worst, just in case. Currently, members of the Seminole Economic Development Corp.

are working toward developing strategies to recruit/develop new business opportunities within our community. This would be a great time for, you, our community residents, to

concerns of our future. Afterall, this is your community, too. And, your voice is valued just as well as the next person, regardless of the color of your skin, your place

express your thoughts, opinions and

of employment or political values. Istrongly urge everyone, no matter how young or old, to express your input on what you would like to see our local community leaders address

for our future. This is your town as well, and your

voice matters. Make contact with your City Council representatives. Make contact with those members of the SEDC Board of Directors. Make your voice heard.

If the action's in Plainview don't scare you at this point in time for our community, then I really like to know

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