

# OPINION

## The Lufkin Daily News editorial board

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### OUR OPINION

## Zavalla Leadership

City owes a debt of gratitude to Carlos Guzman and Waunessa Herrington, who put their health on the line for the health of their community

We offer our thanks and extend our well wishes to former Zavalla Mayor Carlos Guzman, who left office at the beginning of February due to the impact the volunteer position — which turned into a full-time job — was having on his health.

During a retirement party last week, Guzman said he has mixed feelings about leaving behind the post, calling it “something that I love.” But at the end of the day, he has a wife and family he needs to take care of, so we agree with his decision to put his health first.

Zavalla owes a huge debt of gratitude to Guzman for the work his has done for the city. He fought hard for the \$3.2 million grant it received for its water lines and roads and to finish the health clinic. And he started a project to expand sidewalk access in the city.

The grant, which was achieved through a lot of work, was the first of its kind really in existence and one for which only a few communities were selected, according to former city secretary Waunessa Herrington.

And we’d be remiss if we didn’t also express our appreciation to Herrington, who celebrated her retirement Jan. 29.

Both Guzman and Herrington left city government after the worst of Zavalla’s water woes over the holidays had been handled. A complete recovery is still a good way

down the road, but they believe it is at a point where new leadership can take the reins.

Herrington said retirement will benefit both her and her husband’s health. She didn’t realize how much they had been stressing trying to keep the city together, she said during last week’s party. But she has faith in the new city secretary, Leslie Wills, and has been available to answer questions. We’re sure that help is appreciated.

Herrington will enjoy her garden and be able to pick up on things in her life she had been missing while working for the city, while Guzman looks forward to spending more time with his wife Carolyn, their daughter and their grandbabies. Carolyn wants to plan a family vacation, something the Guzmans haven’t been in a position to enjoy in a long time.

While Guzman’s replacement will be determined during the municipal election in May, whoever takes on the position will have some pretty big shoes to fill.

Nonetheless, Huntington city manager Bill Stewart is glad to see his friend taking the next step. While their friendship began as professionals taking care of their respective cities, it grew to a point where they could really talk to each other, he said last week.

“We’ve talked, not just as people who work for city government, but as friends,” Stewart said. “He’s a good guy. The city is going to miss him in this role.”

## Ask if you want to learn real history

I’m trying to imagine how it must have felt, but there’s absolutely no way. No matter how much empathy I hope to possess, it’s impossible to comprehend the idea of someone telling me for decades I’m not allowed to enter somewhere — and then suddenly (and I do mean suddenly) tell me I have no choice but to enter the very same place from which I was forbidden.

Never mind that I’d spent decades overcoming the ban, or that what I did instead ended up being a truly incredible and inspirational story — spawning more such stories over the years.

I’m supposed to forget all that — even worse, I’m supposed to pretend my efforts didn’t happen?

The more I learn about the history of the Dunbar school system, the more I wonder how in the world those who lived through it can still manage to extend anything resembling grace. How do my friends and colleagues — many of whom are around the same age I am — who experienced segregation and outright discrimination carry on today as if some of yesterday’s events weren’t so ugly?

In 1971, the students of the Dunbar school system received a shock. My friend and colleague Winifred told me she first heard it on one of those “breaking news” segments on the 6 o’clock evening news.

After years of experiencing segregation, Dunbar now would be integrated — by force.

Yes. That’s the term used then. “Integrated by force.” We’re talking National Guard presence and everything. The schools in Lufkin were given two weeks to make the adjustment.

Calling it an “adjustment” seems so mild. Kids growing up together in the same, deeply rooted community

now were expected to leave friends behind and move somewhere they weren’t completely wanted.

“It was kind of like being taken away from your home,” Winifred told me. “We were not wanted, nor did we want to go.”

The founders and educators of Dunbar had spent nearly 50 years creating an education system worthy of emulation — mostly because they weren’t allowed to join forces with white schools. Not only did the system succeed, but because of the devotion and perseverance of those involved, the system excelled despite the stifling presence of Jim Crow laws.

And then, just like that, they were supposed to dissolve it?

Worse, the kids — students — involved were supposed to just accept it?

My buddy Oscar told me both schools had already begun preparing for the new school year. They’d elected everything from class officers to cheerleaders to team captains for their respective teams.

Some, like Oscar, had already purchased their Dunbar class rings — only to learn their high school diplomas would not read “Dunbar.”

“I’d purchased my class ring locally, from a local jeweler,” Oscar said. “When I moved to the new high school, I was told if I wanted a new ring I’d have to buy from one of those national companies.

“I didn’t want to. My class ring says, ‘Dunbar Class of 1972’ and the class didn’t even exist.”

No, it didn’t. What was supposed to be the Dunbar classes of ‘71 or ‘72 didn’t walk a Dunbar stage.

Oscar told me there were plenty of people on both sides of the community doing everything possible to make the transition work — but not everyone was on board. Winifred told me about her mom dropping her off at the new school one morning, and as Winifred and other students tried to walk inside, there were white parents outside with weapons, yelling racial epithets

and telling the Black students to “go home.”

Home? You mean where they were before someone threw the “integration by force” at ‘em?

I didn’t experience any of this. For one thing, I’m white. And at the time those things were taking place, I was growing up in a tiny, all-white town in East Tennessee. Anything regarding segregation or integration didn’t reach me. I don’t know if I ever heard or saw it in the news.

When I moved to Texas for my senior year, I enrolled in a school only a couple of years removed from segregation. I didn’t understand then why students of different skin shades gathered apart from other groups, but I sure do now. It’s because before integration, they weren’t wanted.

It only took me about 45 years and some digging into local history to find me a clue.

It only took asking the people who were actually there: What happened, and how did it feel? I know I’m fortunate that Winifred, Oscar and others trusted me enough give it to me straight — even though they had to know I couldn’t possibly understand it all. Some of the things I’ve heard are hard to hear and even harder to fathom.

What a lesson: If we really want to know history — and I mean know it, not just hear about it — we have to ask the people who were there. Maybe it’s a personal conversation, or maybe it’s a writing from someone who served as a witness to it all. Listen to the words of those stories. Read the books instead of banning the ones making us feel uncomfortable.

Take the time to find out what actually happened.

It’s really the only way to understand.

And it’s for damned sure the only way to avoid repeating those past mistakes.

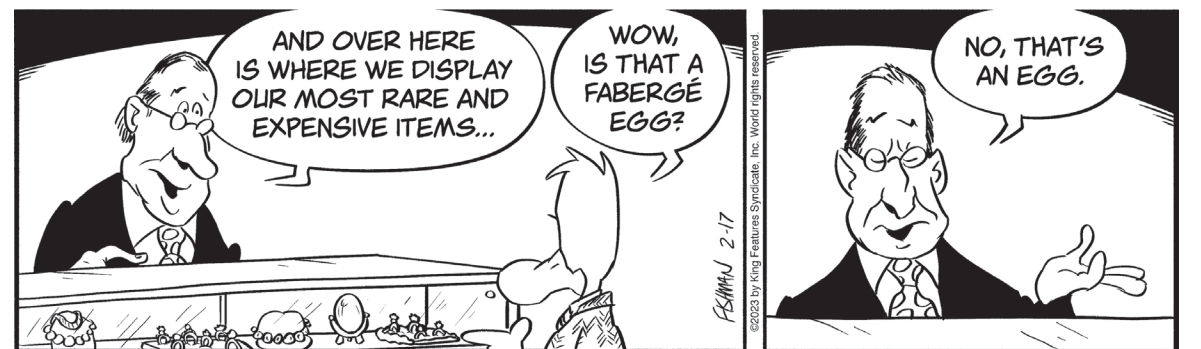
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GARY STALLARD

### MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley



## 5 things happening around your state

On Feb. 15, 1876, Texas adopted the Constitution of 1876. The document is the sixth

constitution by which Texas has been governed since declaring independence from Mexico. Despite having been amended more than 230 times, it remains the basic law of Texas today.

Here are five things happening around your state:

**1. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick releases list of priority bills**

Earlier this week, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick released a list of 30 pieces of legislation that he would like to see passed this session. Included in the list are the state budget, electric grid improvements, property tax relief, school safety, mental health care and other priorities.

These bills will have low bill numbers, which indicates their importance to the lieutenant governor. In his press release, the lieutenant governor made note that several policy initiatives are addressed in the budget and thus will not need a bill. However, those policies are still a priority, including border security funding.

Most of these bills will be filed over the next few weeks and will move through the committee process. To see a full list, go to [tinyurl.com/2v2cxs4z](http://tinyurl.com/2v2cxs4z).

**2. Stephen F. Austin State University honored for centennial anniversary on Senate Floor**

Stephen F. Austin State University President Steve Westbrook and other SFA representatives were honored on the Senate Floor this week to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the university. SFA’s storied history began in 1923 when 270 students matriculated at

the college, which was a teaching university at the time.

The State Board of Regents selected Nacogdoches as the location of the new college because of its heritage as the oldest town in Texas. The homestead of Thomas J. Rusk, formerly owned by Sam Houston, was chosen as the site for the new college. Rusk and Houston had each served as the original two US Senators from Texas.

Today, more than 11,000 students are enrolled at SFA, and the university has expanded its offerings to more than 120 areas of study. Congratulations to everyone who has made SFA the outstanding university it has become!

**3. Data privacy bill filed in the Senate**

Last week, I filed Senate Bill 821 to continue the work I began last session on data privacy.

Last session, I authored Senate Bill 15, which prevented certain state agencies from selling personal data to companies that did not need that data. This session, my work continues in SB 821.

This bill would require the Sunset Advisory Commission to evaluate whether or not a state agency is selling personal data, why they are selling the data, what statute authorizes them to sell the data and to whom they are selling data. The Sunset Advisory Commission is tasked with evaluating the need for and performance of state agencies on a rolling basis.

Each agency is required to go through the Sunset process typically every 12 years. That process is lengthy and closely examines an agency’s mission, purpose, programs, and performance and addresses any problems identified.

This bill would add personal data privacy protections to the sunset process and leave a lasting legacy of data privacy.

**4. Angelina County approves**

**\$80 million grant for battery construction**

The Angelina County Commissioner’s Court approved an \$80 million grant from the Economic Development Grant Program for the construction of Martinez Energy Storage.

The project is intended to build a battery that will store excess energy that Angelina County can use during peak consumption hours. Energy will be stored when there is excess power and will be redistributed when it’s needed.

The deal includes a 10-year tax abatement of 70%, and the company will hire 50 temporary workers for the construction project.

**5. State employee maternity leave bill referred to Senate Business and Commerce Committee**

This week, Senate Bill 222 was referred to the Senate Business and Commerce Committee. This bill, which I authored, gives state employees a paid maternity leave benefit for four weeks after the birth of a child.

If an employee adopts a child, has a child via surrogate or their partner has a child, the benefit is two weeks of paid leave. It is important to support families during the transformative time of welcoming a child into their home.

The state should lead on this issue and guarantee family leave for state employees. Now that the bill has been referred, it will get set for a hearing by the chair of the committee.

Typically, committees start hearings on specific legislation in mid-March after the bill filing deadline.

Robert Nichols is the state senator for Senate District 3. First elected in 2006, Nichols represents 18 counties, including much of East and Southeast Texas and part of Jefferson County. He can be reached at (936) 699-4988. His email address is [robert.nichols@senate.texas.gov](mailto:robert.nichols@senate.texas.gov).

### HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY

#### FEBRUARY 17

##### Five years ago

Lufkin Interdenominational Choir celebrates 44th anniversary with special program at Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church.

Angelina College Roadrunner baseball squad wins ninth straight with a 6-4, 6-0 doubleheader sweep over Mountain View College.

##### Ten years ago

Lufkin ISD trustees finalize priorities for selecting new superintendent. There were 126 people either taking part in the public sessions or submitting forms with their observations, preference.

Lufkin receives accolades from the Texas Historical Commission for 30th consecutive year for successful annual progress as a designated Main Street city.

##### Twenty years ago

Angelina College edges Navarro College 82-76 in Region XIV basketball action at Shands Gym.

Committee members of the 2003 Junior League Big Apple Ball include Lynn Maddux, Karen Watson, Lorrelle Coleman, Linda Stafford, Molly Ellis, Coreta Rich, Jean East, Avery Rhodes, Angie Roper, Alea Greer, Susie Freeman and Cheri Teutsch.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, [TheHistoryCenterOnline.com](http://TheHistoryCenterOnline.com).

### TODAY IN HISTORY

The Associated Press

#### Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 17, the 48th day of 2023. There are 323 days left in the year.

#### Today’s Highlight in History:

On Feb. 17, 1801, the U.S. House of Representatives broke an electoral tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, electing Jefferson president; Burr became vice president.

#### On this date:

In 1815, the United States and Britain exchanged the instruments of ratification for the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

In 1863, the International Red Cross was founded in Geneva.

In 1864, during the Civil War, the Union ship USS Housatonic was rammed and sunk in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, by the Confederate hand-cranked submarine HL Hunley in the first naval attack of its kind; the Hunley also sank.

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. forces invaded Eniwetok Atoll, en-

countering little initial resistance from Imperial Japanese troops. (The Americans secured the atoll day of 2023. There are 323 days left in the year.)

In 1964, the Supreme Court, in *Wesberry v. Sanders*, ruled that congressional districts within each state had to be roughly equal in population.

In 1988, Lt. Col. William Higgins, a Marine Corps officer serving with a United Nations truce monitoring group, was kidnapped in southern Lebanon by Iranian-backed terrorists (he was later slain by his captors).

In 1995, Colin Ferguson was convicted of six counts of murder in the December 1993 Long Island Rail Road shootings (he was later sentenced to a minimum of 200 years in prison).

In 2015, Vice President Joe Biden opened a White House summit on countering extremism and radicalization, saying the United States needed to ensure that immigrants were fully included in the fabric of American society to prevent violent ideologies from taking root at home.