

Early voting begins April 30 for cities, schools

Early voting begins Monday, April 30, and continues through Tuesday, May 8, for city and school elections.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, May 12.

Jacksonville

Jacksonville Mayor Dr. Robert Haberle and challenger Jon Hargett are candidates for mayor. Asking for re-election are Hubert Robinson, District 1, and Kenneth Melvin, District 3.

Jim Tarrant Jr., Robert Douglas and James (Jimmy Lee) Huggins have filed as candidates for Place 1. Ken Smith, Pat McCown, Sarah Jane Robinson and Don B. Gateley have filed as candidates for Place 2.

Rusk

Both the Rusk city and school district elections will be held at the Rusk ISD

administration building. The ballot for mayor includes incumbent Suzann McCarty and challenger Angela Rairborn.

Other candidates asking for election are Councilmembers Kris Morgan, District 1 and Walter Session, District 2.

Candidates for three at large Rusk ISD trustee positions are incumbents Mike Ross, Roy Cavazos and David Fulton and challengers Oliver Sturns and Karen La Vergne.

Alto

The Alto City election will be cancelled as there is no opposition to positions for election. Carey Palmer is the only candidate for mayor and Bob Pearman and Michael Sanders for two council seats.

Six candidates are vying for two seats on the Alto school board. They are Robert Hicks,

Lee Pearman, Jay Jones, Richard Bertrand, Bob Grammer and Linda Brooks.

Wells

Both the Wells city and school elections have no contested races and the elections will be cancelled.

Three incumbents are candidates for the Wells City Council. They are David Bussey, Rex Aycock and Eva Brown.

Three incumbents, Larry Bailey, Susie Edge and Danny Colbert are asking for re-election to the Wells ISD board of trustees. No one filed for the unexpired term of Jason Hopper, who resigned in January. That position is expected to be filled by appointment.

Gallatin

The Gallatin city election will be cancelled. Mayor Juanita Cotton and Council-

members Dorothy Scurlock and Mickie Gunter have all filed for re-election.

Reklaw

Reklaw's city election will be cancelled as there is no opposition to the three positions on the council. Randy Tappen and incumbents John Irwin and Jenelle Laughlin are unopposed in their bid for election.

New Summerfield

The New Summerfield city election has been cancelled. Mayor Dan Stallings and councilmember Maria Armas, candidates Don Cooke and Gerald Anderson are unopposed. Incumbent Jason Wilcox and challengers Glenna Weaver and Scott Bragg are asking for election to the New Summerfield School Board. Two places on the school board expire with the election.

Amendment

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Only nine polling boxes will be open for the election instead of the normal 28 boxes.

Polling box 1 will be held at the Wells fire station for boxes 25 and 29 that normally vote at the fire station and Forrest Baptist Church.

Box 2: Alto fire station for boxes 26 and 27 that normally vote at Pct. 2 county barn and the fire station

Box 3: Rusk ISD administration building for boxes 10, 11, 12, 23, 24 and 28 that normally vote at the civic center, Blount Chapel Church, Gallatin community center; Salem Baptist Church, Cherokee Civic Theatre and Maydelle Assembly of God Church

Box 4: Tyler Street Baptist Church for boxes 13, 14, 15 and 16 that normally vote at Maydelle fire station, Corinth Baptist Church, Tyler Street Baptist Church and Dialville United Methodist Church

Box 5: Jacksonville Public

Library for boxes 36, 38, 42, 43 and 44 that normally vote at New Hope Baptist Church, Jacksonville Activity Center, Old Elberta School, Jacksonville Public Library and Teclua Bapatist Church

Box 6: Mount Selman Baptist Church for boxes 32 and 34 that normally vote at Mount Selman Baptist Church and Mixon First Baptist Church

Box 7: Cove Springs Community Church for boxes 33, 35 and 37 that normally vote at Reese Community Center, Cove Spring Community Church and Mount Haven CME Church

Box 8: New Summerfield ISD for boxes 45 and 47 that normally vote at New Summerfield City Hall and Ponta First Baptist Church

Box 9: Blackjack Baptist Church for boxes 46 and 48 that normally vote at Blackjack Baptist Church and Concord Presbyterian Church.

NEWS

Health screen specialists host stroke prevention and vascular disease screening

A stroke prevention and vascular disease screening is planned for May 3 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church 760 S. Main in Rusk.

These are exams that physicians don't do at annual physicals and insurance companies will not pay for them. To pre-register interested persons may call (800) 931-4772.

Little League Night planned

"Little League Night" will be held Friday, April 27, at the Rusk High School baseball field. Rusk plays the Hudson Hornets. All Rusk Baseball/Softball Association participants from Pre T-Ball and up wearing their jersey may enter the game free.

Youths who have not received new jerseys may wear last year's shirt. Junior varsity will play at 4:30 p.m. and varsity begins at 7 p.m. Two children will be chosen from the crowd to throw out the first pitches for the varsity game. It is also Senior Night.

Poll

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Cherokeean Herald, participants voiced frustration with the state's hesitation to fund the train.

The polls are not scientific but reflect the sentiment of Cherokeean Herald readers. The Web site allows only one vote per IP address.

"The Cherokeean Herald and our radio stations, KTLU and KWRW, have jointly conducted the East Texas Poll for more than 12 years," said Terrie Gonzalez, managing editor. "We received responses from 206 persons as of Monday morning.

"Frankly, we were surprised by the results of the poll, but also by the number of people who took time to e-mail us individual comments," she said.

Mrs. Gonzalez said previous East Texas Polls have been conducted via telephone, but this one was electronic via the Internet.

"I am a strong supporter of full state funding for our beloved Texas State Railroad and for all of Texas' state parks," said Mary Decker of Rusk. "State government has plenty of money to fund the parks system properly and has the responsibility to do so."

Ms. Decker said she observed the effect the lack of funding has had on state railroad visitors as a volunteer at the Rusk depot on weekends.

"They express anger and dismay upon learning that Texas ranks 49th among states in the amount of money spent on parks," she said. "They say that the state government's disregard, even contempt, for the welfare of the parks system reflects the state government's disregard, even contempt, for them."

Sarah Welch of Rusk said she feels like her voice has been ignored.

"The elected officials have ignored the voice of citizens who care about this park and all other state parks," she said. "It is sad to know that they are willing to give away or shut

down this vital piece of history and culture, no matter what the citizens of Texas want."

Robert Townsend points out the desire to save the Texas State Railroad extends beyond Cherokee and Anderson counties.

"The state jewel, the Texas State Railroad, belongs to the entire state of Texas and all of the citizens from El Paso to Dallas to Longview to Houston to Corpus Christi and all points between and within," he said. "It does not belong to Rusk or Palestine or the combination thereof as they seem to think.

"We are very much in favor of funding the Texas State Railroad through TPWD. Please listen to the citizens because they have spoken their wishes."

Jeanette Abercrombie said, "Please don't privatize any of our state treasures, such as the Texas State Railroad. Keep them funded by seeing that the TPWD gets the funding it was promised to do its job."

Bob Edwards of Dayton said the state railroad should be funded by the state, whether through TPWD or the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

"(The state railroad) is family oriented and something that has wide appeal," Mr. Edwards said. "If cutbacks have to happen, there are many others that do not have the family and historical value that the Texas State Railroad has exhibited through the years."

Patsy Spedale, a Cherokeean Herald subscriber in Lafayette, La., said she felt the train should be operated by the TPWD or the THC, "whichever can keep it running."

Lt. Brandon McElroy echoed the sentiment that the train should remain under the state's control.

"The state must continue to take ownership of an entity that is emblematic of Texas' rich, historic

"Elected officials have ignored the voice of citizens who care about this park and all other state parks."

Sarah Welch, Rusk

past. If the THC is up to the task of (operating) the state railroad, then so be it," he said. "Privatization is the option if the state fails to come through. However, I recommend that the contract read something to the effect that the park (including track, land, buildings and rolling stock) can never be used for anything other than what it was intended for. Anything less is the same as scrapping the Battleship Texas for metal, or razing the Alamo to make way for a high-rise."

Jim Harper of Gallatin said state funding should continue through the THC.

"The parks department is not adequately funded and I believe that those who care about Texas will support the historical commission," he said.

So while the legislature continues its "dual track" toward funding the Texas State Railroad, Cherokeean Herald subscribers are not buying into privatization. By a 79 percent margin of 206 votes cast, readers prefer state funding under TPWD.

The House Bill that could pave the way for a private operator to run the Texas State Railroad passed out of a Texas House committee this week.

HB 3113, authored by state Rep. Byron Cook, R-Corsicana, passed out of the House Committee on Culture, Recreation and Tourism on Thursday. The vote was unanimous among the committee members present, according to Cook's office.

Lockdown

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Monday when Chief Barron advised Dr. Ray DeSpain, Alto ISD superintendent, of the weekend stabbing.

"He apprised me of the altercation on Sunday evening," Dr. DeSpain said. "The student that did the attack did not come to school."

When school started, the Alto High School faculty was made aware of the altercation. As of Monday morning, Principal Donald Patton told the Cherokeean Herald that the campus had "implemented heightened security procedures," which entailed informing the staff and making sure all duty stations were manned.

On Monday morning, Mr. Patton told the Cherokeean Herald that the school was not at "lockdown" status.

Throughout the day, Dr. DeSpain said Chief Barron processed the paperwork to apprehend the alleged attacker. When the paperwork was finished and law enforcement was poised to apprehend the suspect, Dr. DeSpain said the lockdown was ordered due to the proximity of the suspect's house to the campus.

"I guess I'm guilty of being very cautious and very safe," Dr. DeSpain

said, adding, "At no time were any students or staff members in danger."

The suspect was apprehended at his home shortly after 2 p.m. Monday. He was given a magistrate warning by Pct. 2 Justice of the Peace Teresa Phifer, then transferred to the juvenile detention facility in Palestine, Chief Barron said.

The victim was interviewed by Chief Barron Monday morning, then returned to school Monday afternoon, Chief Barron said.

Rumors and misinformation surrounded the event and Dr. DeSpain dispelled some of those.

Dr. DeSpain said the suspect was not apprehended in the woods near the campus with a gun. He also dispelled the rumor that the victim was in critical condition.

Chief Barron said the victim was released from the hospital Sunday evening.

Dr. DeSpain expressed his thanks to Chief Barron and the Alto Police Department, as well as the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department. He said at Alto ISD, safety is their number one priority.

Commissioner

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Texas Community Development Program.

Other programs are also available for downtown revitalization and infrastructure initiatives tied to jobs.

Commissioner Staples, who served Cherokee County for 12 years as state representative and later as state senator, said Rusk should take advantage of some of the programs offered through his office. "I'd like to see Rusk put a package together," he said.

The Texas Department of Agriculture's Website offers information on approximately 100 programs, including 16 focused on economic development in rural areas. A May 4 workshop on retirement city designation will be offered to the first 30 who register, and his office will walk applicants through the steps.

The Texas Agriculture Department has come a long way since 1982, when Ag Commissioner Reagan Brown took reporters on a hike to show them the negative impact of fire ants in Texas. To create a photo opportunity, Mr. Brown thrust his hand into a fire ant mound stood up wincing in pain and slapping his arm. The images were splattered over newspaper pages and brought comic attention to the state agency.

Today, the Ag Department hardly resembles the same agency.

No longer is the agency

focused strictly on drought programs and regulatory licensing.

"It's all about marketing in a global economy," said Commissioner Staples, who said that the impact of Texas agriculture on the state is \$85 billion. That represents 9.5 percent of the gross national product," he said.

Texas represents a powerhouse of production and is the backbone of the economy, he said. And that translates to jobs for rural Texas.

He ticked off the potential for biomass, pharmaceutical crops and biofuels that will be included in the renewable energy plan.

He offered advice to local high school students trying to weigh their options with a college career. "Stephen F. Austin University has some great degree plans that are related to the food supply, which is one of our best bargains in the world."

As he surveyed his view of the State Capitol from his office, Commissioner Staples reflected on the East Texas pineywoods, and the new generation of youth who will succeed him.

"There are grand opportunities in the 'fields' of agriculture," he said. "And the pun is intended."

The Texas Department of Agriculture employs 504 persons statewide and has a \$43 million budget.

Movie

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to the Texas State Railroad last week to scout filming locations.

"The Great Debaters" is a movie about the Wiley College debate team, which beat Harvard for the national championship in 1935. Wiley College is a four-year, traditionally African-American university in Marshall. The 1935 debate team not only beat larger African-American schools, but defeated white powerhouses as well.

Karen Helton, vice president of university advancement for Wiley College, said another big victory for that debate team was against the University of Southern California.

"The debates with Harvard and USC are the ones we could document," Ms. Helton said.

Denzel Washington's role will be that of Melvin B. Tolson, Sr., the coach of that debate team. Mr. Tolson wore many hats at Wiley College in the 1930s, including teaching English, coaching football and coaching debate.

"He had a passion for scholarship," Ms. Helton said. "He was paid very little, close to \$40-50 per week. Everything was for the love of scholarship and nurturing his students."

Ms. Helton said Mr. Tolson and the 1935 debate team left a legacy at Wiley College.

"It's one of our grandest legacies," she said. "We maintain archives and are re-instating

the debating tradition."

Ms. Helton said the legacy extends beyond Wiley College.

"James Farmer came up under him. His legacy shaped the civil rights movement."

Mr. Farmer was one of Mr. Tolson's debaters. The spring 1997 edition of American Legacy magazine told the story of how Mr. Farmer had successfully debated against segregation. Upon bragging to Mr. Tolson about his success, Mr. Tolson pointed out the hypocrisy of debating against segregation, then participating in it by going to a segregated movie theatre.

Mr. Tolson then gave Mr. Farmer an essay written by Henry David Thoreau called "Civil Disobedience."

Mr. Farmer went on to found the Congress of Racial Equality in 1942, one of the first groups to conduct a sit-in. He also led the first round of the Freedom Riders through the South in 1961, according to American Legacy.

The movie about this team will intersect with the Texas State Railroad, if the deal is sealed, for a key, dramatic scene.

"The scene is where his college debate team boards the train bound for Boston," said Mark Price, operations superintendent for the Texas State Railroad. "Who in East Texas has a vintage 1930s model steam train?"

Denzel Washington's career highlights

Academy Awards

"Training Day," 2001; "Glory," 1989.

Academy Nominations:

"The Hurricane," 1999; "Malcolm X," 1992 and; "Cry Freedom," 1987.

Golden Globe Awards

"The Hurricane," 1999; and "Glory," 1990.

Most Recent Movie

"Deja Vu," 2006

is exciting for the local community.

"For the bigger cities, this may be more normal, but for us, this is exciting stuff," he said.

Ms. Helton said the production phase of the movie will not last long on location. The crew will only spend two days on campus. Ms. Helton said this is a big budget, major movie.

As for the value of the movie to Wiley College, Ms. Helton said she hopes it accomplishes three things.

"Number-one, it enhances our image nationally," she said. "Number two, it is helping the East Texas region appreciate the value of our college and it presents a unique opportunity for fund raising."

The movie will begin production May 14, and is scheduled for release in 2008.