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Date: Monday, March 7, 2022 8:28:07 AM
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Greg Abbott News

‘Anyone-But-Abbott’ Primary Falls Short Of Electoral Goal, But Touts Moral Victories

By Brad Johnson

The Texan

While Governor Greg Abbott secured the GOP nomination outright Tuesday night, the first step on his path toward re-election was not as smooth as he hoped it'd be before this cycle began.

In the first such challenge of Abbott's long political career, three high-profile candidates — former Texas GOP chair Allen West, former state Sen. Don Huffines, and BlazeTV host Chad Prather — scratched and clawed at the governor for a year, stumping across Texas in what has been labeled the “Anyone-But-Abbott” primary.

It wasn't a long wait for the results on election night, as the race was called barely an hour after polls closed in most of Texas. Once the writing was on the wall, Huffines released a statement saying he “would not contest the election results [but] declared victory on forcing the governor to the right.”

Looking at the voting returns alone might suggest the primary challenge was a nothing burger — Huffines and West both finished with around 12 percent of the vote. But the road to it featured more than its fair share of obstacles. Every controversy that could be made a campaign issue was delivered as a body shot to the incumbent.

Chief among those was the episode(s) with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). In August of last year, Huffines spotlighted a section of the DFPS website that read “The educational and support resources on this page are dedicated to helping empower and celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, alley, and non-heterosexual (LGBTQIA+) youth, their peers, and family.”

After Huffines pointed this out, alleging the agency was “promoting perverted and damaging ideology,” the section disappeared from the website — something that internal department emails showed stemmed directly from Huffines' criticism.

A similar line of events occurred in November when training materials from the same agency were found that read in part, “Any institutional activity that creates racial inequalities and results in the subordination or oppression of people of color is institutional racism.”

“Critical Race Theory is a disgusting Marxist ideology dedicated to pitting Texans against each other and dividing our state,” Huffines stated.

The training was then eliminated from the department’s curriculum slate.

Abbott addressed neither of these incidents directly, letting the agency speak for itself. And while the governor doesn’t run the agencies that operate beneath them, they do, ultimately, report to him.

The three challengers harangued Abbott and other state leaders over child gender modification for months before receiving what they see as a half-measure. After months of waiting, the Office of the Attorney General finally issued its legal opinion that stated puberty blockers and gender transition surgeries may already be prosecuted under current law as child abuse.

But Abbott’s team appears committed to stay the course on that issue. Dave Carney, Abbott’s top strategist, said in a Wednesday press call, “That [issue] is a 75 percent to 85 percent winner. That is a winning issue. Texans have common sense.”

In Huffines’ election night statement, he rattled off various issues he believes his campaign spurred movement on from the incumbent: constitutional carry, the Heartbeat Act, border security, Critical Race Theory in schools, vaccine mandates, and the executive actions on gender modification procedures.

On the lattermost two issues, Huffines and other anti-Abbott Republicans have said repeatedly the governor hasn’t done enough — namely, saying he hasn’t pushed the envelope with the legislature to force them to pass related laws.

Speaking to *The Texan* on Monday night, Huffines underscored those issues as victories for his campaign.

“Without my campaign, I don’t think we would’ve gotten the Heartbeat Bill done; constitutional carry done; the election integrity bill done,” he said also pointing to the DFPS items. “I think those are just the obvious victories.”

Huffines then said he doesn’t think special sessions, other than for redistricting, occur without his candidacy. Among the issues on the special sessions roll calls, eight of them can be described as conservative red meat issues: election reform, border security, social media censorship, a requirement that youth athletes compete within their biological sex, restriction on abortion-inducing drugs, a stronger Critical Race Theory ban, property tax relief, and vaccine mandate prohibitions.

Republicans will disagree amongst themselves how effectively each one of these was ultimately addressed, but none of these appeared on a special session agenda in 2019 — as none were called.

“If he wasn’t in a [primary] campaign, he would’ve just returned right back to where he rests, and it’s to the left of the center,” Huffines emphasized.

“Since the pandemic, [Abbott] knew I was coming after him and Carney’s really smart so the

governor pivoted as hard right as he could.”

Asked about the primary’s effect on Abbott’s decisions, Carney said Wednesday, “Greg Abbott’s never shifted on an issue for elections, ever.”

West was less specific but told *The Texan* before results rolled in on election night, “[My campaign has] brought a great awareness of the issues out there and shows that anyone can stand up for Texas, and it doesn’t take \$60 million to do it.”

One of the issues West harped on most was the vaccine mandate within Texas’ military, pointing the blame at Texas’ top official. After a couple of months of West banging the drum on that issue, Abbott began to push back against the federal government which issued the directive — suing the Biden administration in January.

Back in August, Abbott had issued an executive order prohibiting government vaccine mandates, which was then fashioned to ban it for all entities, but the Texas National Guard was still subject to and beginning to enforce the federal mandate.

Just before the filing period closed, another curveball was thrown at the incumbent governor when Rick Perry decided to jump in the race — the twist being that it wasn’t Abbott’s predecessor.

The actual Perry who filed is a GOP activist from Parker County, and he pulled in 62,205 votes nearly tripling Kandy Kay Horn who spent \$1.3 million on billboards across the state. Perry spent less than \$300, good for a \$0.004 cost-per-vote.

“The Founders created our country to be run by citizen legislators, and they didn’t believe it should cost millions of dollars to run for office,” he told *The Texan* in an interview on Thursday.

His candidacy, Perry said, was an effort to cut into Abbott’s returns in the hopes of pushing the governor to a runoff.

“Part of the reason I ran was to prove the citizen legislator point and because of my name ID.”

But Perry isn’t as buoyant about the policy victories Huffines tallied, saying he believes the governor’s focus on some of those conservative issues will not outlast the primary.

It didn’t take 12 rounds, but Abbott didn’t leave the ring without a scratch. He spent at least \$30 million during the primary, not typically a sum to be dropped on a pointless challenge. Now he heads into the heavyweight matchup with Democrat Beto O’Rourke.

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Beto O’Rourke Pledges To Increase School Funding, Fight Vouchers During Dallas Campaign Stop

By Corbett Smith

Dallas Morning News

In his first public event after winning the Democratic primary for governor, Beto O’Rourke

took the stage in a North Dallas church for a town hall on what he says is the most pressing issue in Texas: education.

O'Rourke pledged support for teacher pay increases and more money for public schools while pushing back on the renewal of voucher efforts in the state as he gave a sweeping overview of his policy ambitions.

"If we want to see better jobs in this state, and want Texans to actually work them, we've got to improve our pre-K through community college systems of education in the state of Texas," O'Rourke said, adding that the state has fallen behind others during Gov. Greg Abbott's tenure. "We've got to be the best in the country. And when we do that, not only will we be creating better jobs ... but we'll have a workforce that will actually be able to compete for them."

The Dallas event was the first of a handful of policy-specific town halls that O'Rourke will have throughout the state, addressing issues such as jobs and health care.

Abbott, too, used the Dallas area as a launching point for his educational platform, announcing his "Parental Bill of Rights" in January at Lewisville's Founders Classical Academy.

After being introduced by Dallas' State Board of Education member Aicha Davis, O'Rourke tied Monday's anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" — where John Lewis and other protesters were beaten by Selma, Ala., police during a march on voting rights on Mar. 7, 1965 — to the ensuing efforts from another Texas political leader, Lyndon Baines Johnson.

A little more than a week after Lewis and others were attacked, Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress to push for the Voting Rights Act. In his speech, Johnson recalled his time as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, at a segregated school.

"Somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child," Johnson said during his address.

O'Rourke said that Johnson "understood that our public school classrooms are perhaps the most perfect representation of our democracy that exists."

"Yes, we learn reading, writing and arithmetic in those classrooms, right?" he said. "But we also learn how to work together, and how to not see each other as the enemy at the end of the day. We learn civics; we learn to do and build and create things together. And, at the end of the day, isn't that what democracy is?"

Prior to taking questions from the crowd, O'Rourke quickly ran through four education-focused policy points.

He repeatedly stressed the need to attract, recruit and retain high-quality educators. O'Rourke said that he'd like to get teacher pay in Texas "at least" to the national average.

The national average for public school teachers for 2019-20 was \$64,133, according to data from the National Education Association. Texas ranked 27th, with an average salary of \$57,090, over \$7,000 less than the national average.

He added that he wants to provide retired teachers a cost-of-living increase, something that state lawmakers haven't approved since 2013.

As for school funding, O'Rourke said state leaders must reject voucher-like efforts and instead fully fund public schools and special education. In general, vouchers allow families to use money that would have otherwise flowed to public schools on private school education.

In perhaps his most specific policy solution, O'Rourke said he wants Texas schools funded by enrollment and not by attendance — the current mechanism. With statewide attendance rates at around 96% even before the pandemic, attendance-based funding leaves public schools to fill the gap for approximately 260,000 students who are enrolled but aren't in regular attendance.

O'Rourke also targeted the state's assessment, the STAAR test. He said if he were in office right now, he would cancel the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness for the current school year. In the future, he pledged to change the assessment system so that it would be used more as a diagnostic test to help students and schools and less as a cudgel for "punitive measures."

During the townhall, Rosemary Curts — a Dallas ISD educator and teacher union Alliance/AFT steward — asked O'Rourke about Dallas' teacher pay and evaluation system, which heavily relies on student assessments like STAAR. Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath, a former Dallas ISD trustee, has pushed the model statewide, as part of a teacher pay pilot. O'Rourke responded that Curts had his "commitment" that he wouldn't support tying pay to student assessments.

O'Rourke didn't give much oxygen to the current furor over "critical race theory" nor how race and sex is being taught in Texas schools. Such topics have been key issues for some conservative politicians.

After the event, O'Rourke told The Dallas Morning News that in his travels across the state in recent years, he "almost uniformly" hears parents talk about more substantive issues, like educational quality and teacher pay, and not the academic theory that's debated in higher education and not K-12 schools.

"Of all the challenges that we have in public ed ... let's focus on the problems that we really have," O'Rourke said. "We don't have a problem with CRT. We don't have a problem with transgender kids in middle school athletics. We really have problems with reading, graduation and college preparedness. Let's focus on that."

Abbott, in his campaign stop in Lewisville, outlined what he saw was needed to "restore parents as the primary decision-makers of their child's education and healthcare issues."

Included in that call was requiring school districts to provide all course materials and curriculum available to parents, and targeting the removal of teacher licenses for educators who give students "obscene" content.

A gaggle of state and local politicians were in attendance at Northhaven Church, including Mike Collier, the Democratic candidate for Lieutenant Governor, State Sen. Nathan Johnson (D-Dallas), and a handful of Democratic state representatives: DeSoto's Carl Sherman, Dallas'

Rafael Anchia and Julie Johnson, and Carrollton's Michelle Beckley.

But the politician who received the loudest ovation was Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, so much so that O'Rourke said that he would mention Jenkins if needed to get the crowd's energy back up.

O'Rourke did just that 15 minutes into his talk, when a pair of hecklers — including Highland Park reality star and self-professed professional troll Alex Stein — shouted at the candidate from the church's balcony.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Clay Jenkins!" O'Rourke quipped as Stein was escorted out of the venue.

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State News

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Uncounted Mail-In Ballots Discovered In Harris County Add Uncertainty To Two Democratic Races

By Mitchell Ferman

Texas Tribune

Two notable Democratic primary races have gained a new level of uncertainty after Texas' largest county said it "identified approximately 10,000 mail-in ballots (6,000 Democratic and 4,000 Republican) that were not added into the original Election Night count."

Harris County said the weekend after Tuesday's primary election that the ballots were scanned into its tabulation computer but "were not transferred and counted as a part of the unofficial final results as they should have been." The results from those ballots will be added to the vote count on Tuesday, the county said.

In the Democratic race for the seat to represent parts of downtown and northeast Houston in the statehouse, incumbent state Rep. Harold V. Dutton Jr. leads challenger Candis Houston by 136 votes, 50.8% to 49.2%.

And the race to determine the Democratic candidate for attorney general of Texas could also be impacted. Rochelle Garza, a former American Civil Liberties Union lawyer from Brownsville, led a crowded primary field and is already locked into the runoff election, but her Democratic opponent could hinge on the Harris County tally.

Former Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski leads civil rights attorney Lee Merritt by 1,418 votes overall.

Houston, Dutton's opponent, conceded the race on Thursday in an email to supporters, though The Texas Tribune's election partner Decision Desk has not called the race. Houston's campaign did not immediately respond to questions from the Tribune about the discovery of uncounted ballots.

Dutton said he's skeptical of the situation.

“It seems to me that somebody should’ve known that 10,000 ballots were missing,” Dutton said in an interview Sunday. “If 10,000 ballots were missing and nobody knew that, God help us.”

Dutton said he has not heard from the county and they haven’t returned his phone calls.

The county said in its statement that the error occurred in the hours after election night, between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. Officials are investigating how “the missteps took place in the process.”

“While we understand the seriousness of this error, the ability to identify and correct this issue is a result of a lengthy and rigorous process and is a positive example of the process ultimately working as it should,” the statement said.

Harris County experienced a handful of issues on election day this year. The county, which is more populous than 26 states, took more than a day to report its results in part due to more than 1,600 ballots sheets being damaged. Like many counties, it also reported having a shortage of election workers. And two voting sites in the counties reported minor technical problems with machines.

Dutton’s House District 142 makes up only a portion of Harris County, so not all of the 6,000 votes found will factor into the race. It’s not immediately clear how many votes will be added into the race.

In the attorney general’s race, Jaworski declared victory in getting the second runoff spot on Friday. Merritt, however, has not conceded and Decision Desk has not declared who has secured the second spot.

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‘Not Inclusive’: Fired LGBTQ Employee Alleges Culture Of Discrimination At Dallas Arboretum

By Maggie Prosser

Dallas Morning News

A former Dallas Arboretum employee says they were unjustly fired because of their gender identity — despite boosting attendance at the Children’s Garden and receiving praise from co-workers — and claims their termination is illustrative of a larger culture of discrimination at the organization.

The former employee, who uses she and they pronouns, said their termination followed dissent by management about their use of gender-expansive pronouns. However, their termination letter, which The Dallas Morning News reviewed, cites not complying with the dress code and mismanaging staff.

Allegations of a “hostile, rigid and not inclusive” work environment were detailed in a discrimination complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the city of Dallas’ Fair Housing Office in November.

In an interview with The News, the former employee described patterns of bigotry by management against staff, as well as a mission of diversity that was only “surface-level.”

“My experience is not unique. It’s been happening at the arboretum to LGBT folks, to people of color, to women and just a lot of marginalized communities,” they said. The employee agreed to speak on the condition of anonymity because they have not told their family about their gender identity.

A spokeswoman for the arboretum, Terry Lendecker, said in an email that the facility had not been notified about the complaint by the EEOC.

“The Dallas Arboretum takes this charge very seriously,” Lendecker said. “We believe in diversity and the equal treatment of all our employees. We will certainly present all the facts to the EEOC.” She added that the arboretum does not comment on personnel matters.

Neither the arboretum nor employees named in the complaint responded to follow-up questions. Executives on the arboretum’s board of directors either did not respond to requests for comment or had no comment.

Shelly Skeen, a lawyer with Lambda Legal representing the former employee, said the arboretum had asked for an extension to respond to the complaint.

The Dallas EEOC office did not respond to requests for comment, but a national spokesman said the commission cannot speak about pending complaints. The Dallas Fair Housing Office, which investigates allegations of employment discrimination, did not respond to requests for comment.

The arboretum — located on 66 acres of city-owned land on the southeastern shore of White Rock Lake — is managed by the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society and is funded largely by donations and admission fees. The News is a sponsor of the gardens.

The arboretum receives a sliver of its funding from taxpayers — less than 2% — as well as a stipend from the city and support from the Parks and Recreation Department. More than 1 million people visited the gardens in 2021.

‘Conservative institution’

The former employee, who is in their 30s and genderqueer, was furloughed at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and then rehired in June 2020 to oversee public programs in the Rory Meyers Children’s Adventure Garden.

That fall, the complainant added their pronouns to their email signature and began wearing small pins that read “they/ellos” and “she/ella.” A few other employees followed suit, according to the discrimination complaint.

It was the first time the employee had shared their gender identity, the complaint says. Genderqueer typically describes someone who views their gender as fluid or outside the binary of male or female, according to the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy group.

At that time, the arboretum did not have a standard format for email signatures. Some

employees had quotes, mantras or Bible verses in their signatures, Skeen said.

An upper-level manager sent a directive to staff about a month later saying email signatures needed to be standardized and could not include pronouns, the complaint says. The former employee told The News a donor had complained about seeing pronouns in a cisgender employee's signature.

The complaint also alleges that management did not make accommodations for the employee's disability, which impaired their ability to walk across the property and made them late to a meeting, and disciplined them for wearing a headscarf to protect from sun exposure.

The employee was warned about missing or being late to meetings in a May 17 memo included in the complaint. Skeen said the employee had not been previously disciplined, their performance reviews said they met or exceeded expectations and co-workers raved about their leadership. Attendance at the Children's Garden also grew during their tenure, according to the complaint.

On May 20, 2021, the employee and their staff introduced themselves and stated their pronouns to their new upper-level manager. The former employee told The News that pronoun introductions were used internally among their staff — three full-time employees and about a dozen part-timers — to ensure “everyone was valued, respected and felt safe in their environment.”

The next day, that manager and the arboretum's director of human resources told the employee during a meeting that “the Arboretum is a ‘conservative institution,’ that donors had complained about employees' use of pronoun pins, and that the Arboretum could ‘not promote an agenda,’” the complaint says. They were told not to introduce themselves with their pronouns or wear pronoun pins.

The employee told The News that donors did not explicitly complain about their pins, which were about the size of a quarter. Complaints, however, had been made about a transgender employee's larger pin, they said.

The employee told the HR director they were not OK with the changes.

The following Monday, the employee was terminated, according to the complaint. The complaint alleges the employee's termination was tied to their “sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation [and] disability status.”

The termination letter, included in the complaint, listed late arrival to a meeting, failure to adhere to company dress code and failure to manage staff, among the reasons for the dismissal.

“It's hard to describe the emotion,” the employee said of their firing. “There was a lot of panic and fear because it was the first time that I truly thought I could lose my job over standing up for who I am.”

“Beyond the career aspect of it, there's a certain sense of grief and pain that happens,” they said. “It's one of those emotions that until it happens to you, you can't describe it.”

In an open letter published on Lambda Legal's website, the complainant wrote: "While drying my tears, I listened to [the director of human resources] tell me that she personally supports the LGBTQ+ community, but the Arboretum can't force it on the public. It would be like a vegetarian or vegan making others follow their dietary choices. Hearing a leader I trusted compare my identity to a choice was at that moment the lowest point of my career."

The former employee told The News they later spoke with top management, including Mary Brinegar, the arboretum's CEO and president, who explicitly mentioned the "pronouns stuff" as an example of mismanagement by the former employee.

The former employee described an attitude toward diversity among upper-level management that seeped into the work culture at the arboretum. They described trying to introduce diverse programs that were ultimately nixed by managers.

The former employee said only initiatives that were "surface-level" understandings of diversity and that executives found "tolerable" to a "very conservative, white, Christian" audience were allowed.

They said that during Arab American Heritage Month, a manager told them not to mention religion in the programming, for example. The former employee noted the irony of that request, given the arboretum's Christmas Village.

'Profound effect on people's lives'

Following a Dallas Voice article reporting the discrimination charge, parks and recreation director John Jenkins sent a letter to Brinegar, the arboretum's president, on Jan. 19 advising the arboretum to adhere to the nondiscrimination clause laid out in its operational agreement with the city, KERA News reported.

That clause says the arboretum cannot discriminate against any employee based on "race, age, color, ancestry, national origin, place of birth, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, military or veteran status, genetic characteristics, or disability unrelated to job performance."

The agreement says if the arboretum fails to comply with the equal employment opportunity provisions, the city can terminate or suspend the partnership or declare the arboretum ineligible for future city contracts until it complies.

The parks department said in an email to The News that the city "takes allegations of discrimination at all organizational levels seriously. Contracted and management partner organizations are expected to adhere to the city's nondiscrimination policies and practices, as well as follow state and federal anti-discrimination laws."

Dallas' city charter protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, and violating this is punishable by a fine paid to the city, Skeen said. The complainant may be entitled to compensation for lost income or accrued expenses if the EEOC finds evidence of discrimination, Skeen said.

Federal and state court rulings have also granted legal protections to LGBTQ employees in Texas, despite there not being a statewide policy barring anti-LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace, Skeen said.

The former arboretum employee said their fight is much more than wearing a pin or a line in an email: It's about recognizing identities.

A 2021 study by the Pew Research Center found that about 26% of American adults say they know someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns when referring to themselves. That number is up from 18% in 2018.

Half of Americans said they would feel very or somewhat comfortable using a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to someone. But 48% of people surveyed said they would feel very or somewhat uncomfortable doing so, according to the study.

“This complaint is not just about me,” the former employee said. “It is about trying to push forward an understanding at the arboretum of how workplace culture and policies truly affect the employees and how exclusionary practices can have such a profound effect on people’s lives.”

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Nearly Week After Primaries, Election Troubles Continue With Uncounted Mail-In Ballots, Late Equipment Returns

By Sam Gonzalez Kelly

Houston Chronicle

Harris County election officials must still tally an additional 10,000 mail-in ballots, nearly a week after polls closed in a primary election plagued with problems, including hourslong delays tracked back to a Baytown precinct judge’s failure to return a piece of voting equipment.

Over 10,000 mail-in ballots — about 6,000 cast by Democratic voters and about 4,000 by Republicans — were scanned by the Central County Committee but never added into the final results. The error occurred between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. Wednesday, Harris County Elections officials announced late Saturday.

“We have reached out to and are working in coordination with the Secretary of State’s Office as we investigate the missteps that took place in this process,” officials said. “While we understand the seriousness of this error, the ability to identify and correct this issue is a result of a lengthy, rigorous process and is a positive example of the process ultimately working as it should.”

The Secretary of State’s office said they notified Harris County officials of the oversight on Friday after they noticed a discrepancy on the election night reconciliation form, which indicated a difference of 10,072 between the number of ballots counted and the number of eligible votes cast.

“We agree that this is the process working as it should, and we note that it’s only because this Election Night reconciliation form is now required for all 254 counties that we were able to identify the discrepancy and work with the county to find out exactly what happened,” said secretary of state spokesman Sam Taylor.

On Sunday, Harris County election officials also confirmed that a precinct judge at the Baytown Junior High polling place failed to return one of four pieces of voting equipment to the election center directly after the polls closed, contributing to delays that caused the final tally to come in 30 hours after the polls closed.

That tally did not include the 10,000 mail-in ballots that were missed.

Judges are required to return all pieces of equipment immediately after the polls close, according to Harris County Elections spokeswoman Leah Shah. When the Baytown precinct judge failed to return a “scan” — a “secured piece of equipment that holds mechanical ballots/votes” — after numerous requests from the elections office, a Precinct 3 constable’s deputy was sent to their home to retrieve it.

Those votes have since been processed, and elections officials stressed that the integrity of those votes was not at risk.

“While delays are inconvenient and require a significant amount of resources to remedy, the security of the ballot is at no point in question,” Shah said. “From the moment a judge takes possession of the election equipment prior to election day, to the moment they return equipment on election night, there is a chain of custody and numerous safeguards in place to ensure the security of the ballot.”

The missteps are the latest in a series of problems involving last week’s primary. Over 1,600 ballot sheets were damaged on Election Day, slowing down the counting process, and the county’s election website map, which shows voters where they can cast their ballots, went dark for 90 minutes right before the polls opened Tuesday.

Some voting sites were also plagued by faulty machines and staffing issues, and just after polls closed on Tuesday, Secretary of State John Scott released a statement saying that Harris County Elections had requested an extension to the 24-hour deadline. Harris County Elections Administrator Isabel Longoria has disputed that report, though the final results did come in past the deadline.

Mail-in voting especially has been a contentious issue since the passage of Texas’ Republican-backed voting bill last year which tightened restrictions on absentee voting in a supposed attempt to tamp down on voter fraud, despite a lack of evidence of any widespread fraud ever existing.

About 40 percent fewer mail-in ballots were cast during this latest election cycle amid the confusion, and nearly 40 percent of the ballots initially cast by mail in Harris County were rejected due to the new ID restrictions.

While the GOP has blamed the new election authority established in 2020 for the problems with Tuesday’s primary, local and state Democrats say the bill has made it harder for Harris County’s independent election authority to effectively do its job.

“I have spoken to the Election Administrators office this morning to share we must rectify this mistake immediately, understanding the urgency of ensuring every vote is counted and voice is heard. We expect action to be taken quickly,” said Odus Evbagharu, chair of the Harris County Democrats. “Voters should know the Harris County Democratic Party is actively

monitoring the situation.”

The Harris County GOP saw the issues with Tuesday’s primary as another example of incompetence on the part of Longoria and Democratic officials.

“Every voter, regardless of party, should be able to have confidence that their vote has been properly counted. Unfortunately, this is another example of the serious mismanagement of Lina Hidalgo’s unqualified Elections Administrator. Isabel Longoria owes all Harris County voters an explanation,” said Harris County GOP Chairman Cindy Siegel.

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Education

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Texas Students Push Back Against Book Bans For Censoring LGBTQ, Racial Justice Issues

By Brooke Park
Texas Tribune

For high school senior Gabrielle Izu, Texas’ public school book bans feel personal.

The books Texas is targeting — mainly novels that focus on discussions of race, sexual orientation and gender identity — tell the tale of Izu’s past and future. The 17-year-old high school student is Asian American, Black and Hispanic and bisexual, and she hates to see her identities or her peers’ censored.

“I ignored [my sexuality] for a really long time. And I think that as a young girl, if a book showed me that this is a life that could be lived, I could have had a lot more peace and coming to terms with bisexuality,” said Izu, who attends James E. Taylor High School in the Katy Independent School District near Houston.

Here and there, Texas students are forming their own book clubs to read what adults want banned. Books like Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale,” Ashley Hope Perez’s “Out of Darkness” and Carmen Maria Machado’s “In the Dream House.” Books that, until last fall, were easy to find and access.

In Katy ISD, students have distributed hundreds of novels challenged by adults in Texas. They’re getting the books free of charge from a political advocacy organization and publishers. And Leander ISD near Austin, students are coming together in a banned-book club to discuss those books. Some students are starting to attend school board meetings to fight for the freedom to choose what to read.

More than a hundred Katy ISD students of a variety of ages, races and gender identities met after school to discuss the bans and pick up contested novels. Among the books they’re reading is Kalynn Bayron’s “Cinderella is Dead,” a novel that follows a queer, Black teenager’s coming-of-age story. Izu, who saw herself reflected in the book, said her heart broke when Texas schools targeted it for a ban.

“It felt like my identity was seen as dangerous because of the banning of a story like that. What about my story? Am I seen as a bad influence?” Izu said. “Am I seen as something that

should be shamed?”

Texas parents and politicians say they are protecting students with book bans. Many students, including Cameron Samuels, a senior at Seven Lakes High School in Katy ISD, aren't buying it.

“It's clear that these books address issues of race and LGBTQ identities, and that is the exact reason that certain people are seeking to remove these books from libraries and prohibit students from accessing them,” said Samuels, who helped with distribution efforts. “And these policies have dire consequences for us because they keep us struggling with our queer identities.”

Katy ISD students showed strong support at the events, Samuels said. But not all parents are happy, and some have even tried to enter the school to disturb student discussions on Texas' book bans, they said.

“As far as I have seen, parents have been the center focus of the movement to ban books and remove them from libraries, where students have been at the forefront of advocating for having access to these books,” Samuels said.

Books on race are also targeted, especially after Texas lawmakers passed a social studies law to target what they referred to as critical race theory, though the law does not specifically mention it. Critical race theory is a university-level discipline that considers how racism is embedded in policies and systems. The new law states that a teacher “may not be compelled to discuss a widely debated and currently controversial issue of public policy or social affairs” in public schools. While this law primarily applies to social studies curriculum, some are also trying to apply it to any book found in a school library.

Katy ISD removed, temporarily, Jerry Craft's “New Kid,” which explores how more subtle or indirect discrimination impacts Black students in a mostly white school. The school district took the action after a parents claimed the book presented harmful content about critical race theory.

The district returned “New Kid” to shelves last semester, but Samuels said only students in fifth grade and up are permitted to check it out.

Samuels, who is nonbinary, said the novel comforted them, as they have often felt isolated as one of the few students at their school who use they/them pronouns.

“I have often felt alone and have experienced microaggressions,” Samuels said. “There's no reason that addressing these issues should be something that students are prevented from doing or prohibited from learning about.”

Katy ISD does not allow students to distribute books the district banned. Samuels said it feels condescending that those in power decide what students can and cannot read.

“As students, we must take ownership of our education and not let others decide for us which resources we can access and which topics we can learn about,” they said.

At a recent Katy ISD school board meeting, students packed the room to call for the district to return books to libraries. Samuels and other students plan to continue to protest book bans at a

Capitol rally on March 12.

“This is censorship. This is bad,” Izu said. “This is condemning things that shouldn’t be condemned.”

Book bans exploded across the state and country during this school year. In October, state Rep. Matt Krause, R-Fort Worth, called on schools to disclose whether any of about 850 book titles were in their libraries. He said books “that might make students feel discomfort” should also be identified.

Weeks later, Gov. Greg Abbott asked the Texas Education Agency to investigate the availability of “pornographic” books at school libraries.

Maghan Sadeghi, a James E. Taylor High School senior who is working with book distribution efforts, said Abbott’s statement sounds “like a bunch of ignorance.” She notes that her AP literature class requires many readings that reference sex. In “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” it is suggested on several occasions that staff rape patients. In “Hamlet,” sex before marriage is compared to a worm invading a flower before it blooms.

“They’re OK with heterosexual scenes, heterosexual ideas. But the second something turns slightly, slightly queer, slightly homosexual, it discomforts them. It’s the same thing with [people of color] viewpoints,” Sadeghi said. “Why do we have to remove books about Black people and Asian Americans simply for the sake of white people’s comfort?”

In Leander ISD, students gather together every two weeks to answer a similar question: Should this book be banned?

Vandegrift High School sophomores Ella Scott and Alyssa Hoy created the school’s banned-book club after looking at the list of books their district aimed to ban last year. The district would remove some of their favorite books from classroom libraries, and as a result, the students began having discussions about decisions they felt the district made without them.

“I loved ‘The Handmaid’s Tale,’” Scott said, referring to Atwood’s novel about a totalitarian society that forces fertile women to be raped so they can carry to term the offspring of elite couples. It’s now one of the restricted books in her school. “I love that book. Forever. It’s one of my favorites. Seeing it on the list was definitely disorienting.”

Leander ISD has so far removed the physical copies of 11 book titles from classroom libraries, but nine of those still reside in the school’s main and digital libraries, according to Matt Mitchell, Leander ISD’s communications coordinator.

During study hall, dozens of students from all grades meet to discuss one of the banned books’ plot and purpose, as well as who should have access to its storylines. So far, they generally agree the banned books furthered their education and should be freely accessible in the classroom.

Often, the students discuss how each book introduces to them new perspectives or even historical events.

Pérez’s now-banned novel “Out of Darkness” follows a love affair between Naomi, a Mexican

American high school senior, and Wash, a Black teenager, in the days before the 1937 gas explosion at the New London school, still one of the worst national disasters in history. Many book club students were unaware of this tragic event in the East Texas town of New London.

“These are very powerful stories,” Hoy said. “Most of the time, those tough decisions and tough scenes are reasons why they are so powerful and so meaningful to so many people.”

Last semester, the club had members purchase their books. Recently, the club set up an Amazon wish list to fund book purchases. In 24 hours, donated funds paid for the group’s books. Hoy said the community has supported the club through the semester.

“Eventually, we hope our club won’t be necessary,” Scott said. “We just hope that our voices and our opinions will be considered.”

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Will Dallas’ Next Superintendent Come From Within The District?

By Emily Donaldson

Dallas Morning News

Few educators would spend their entire career in one district – rising through the ranks from teacher to superintendent – only to leave the top post after less than two years for a deputy position in another district across the country.

But Susana Cordova did just that when she left her job as Denver Public Schools’ chief to take on the number two role in Dallas at the end of 2020. Her unusual move left many speculating whether she was being tapped to succeed longtime district leader Michael Hinojosa.

Cordova built her career in Colorado focusing on the highest-need students and building close relationships with teachers, colleagues said.

Hinojosa leans heavily on Cordova for some of the most difficult tasks -- such as pandemic recovery efforts -- but her more contemplative leadership style in Dallas has been an interesting complement to the more boisterous outgoing leader.

“She’s not one to take center stage and she’s not one to say, ‘Look at me, look at me, look at me,’” said Carrie Olson, a former school board president in Denver. “I’m a horseback rider, so she’s more like the workhorse than the show pony.”

Earlier this year, Hinojosa announced plans to step down from his role as superintendent, leaving DISD to launch its first national search for a successor since 2011. Texas’ second largest district is one of several in North Texas with departing leaders.

A handful of districts quickly found their next top leaders within their own central offices. In recent weeks, trustees in Lewisville, Plano, Mesquite and Hurst-Euless-Bedford either named or approved their deputy superintendents to succeed outgoing chiefs.

Hinojosa’s board charged him with making sure a similar option was available in DISD – trustees told him to train up a potential successor before he announced his resignation, he said, begging the question: will Dallas be the next to promote from within?

“I love this job,” Hinojosa previously told The Dallas Morning News, “but while I’ve never felt comfortable leaving for another opportunity, now it’s different because of Susana.”

So while trustees are moving forward with a larger search, Cordova is still viewed by many as a leading candidate.

In Denver, she was a “bottom up” leader, knowing the role of every employee in her district well because she had worked in many of those positions previously, former colleagues said.

She listened closely to teachers -- many of whom she worked with day-to-day on campuses when she taught dual-language classes -- and was known as a contemplative figure, taking time to absorb new information and respond, rather than react quickly.

The News spoke with her former colleagues about her leadership style and vision for schools. Cordova declined several requests for an interview in time for publication.

Hinojosa plans to leave the district by the end of 2022. He hopes the board picks a superintendent who will shape the district for years to come.

“What I think [the board] needs to look for is someone who has staying power that can do this for 10 more years because we’re on a good roll, and we can’t really go backwards,” he said.

Relationship with teachers

Almost all of Cordova’s life as a student and educator took place in Denver, where she both attended and taught in the city’s public schools.

She started as a bilingual teacher in 1989 at one of Denver’s middle schools before moving into a different role teaching both English and English as a second language at the high school level. In less than 15 years, she was recruited to work at a district-level role.

She served as the district’s executive director of teaching and learning, chief academic officer, chief schools officer and deputy superintendent before eventually becoming the top leader in early 2019.

About a month into her new job, Cordova grappled with thousands of teachers leaving the classroom for the first strike in a quarter-century. Teachers protested low and unpredictable wages and remained on strike for three days as the new superintendent worked with the union over potential solutions.

Rob Gould, a special education teacher for more than two decades, was the union’s lead negotiator at the time. Reflecting on the strike, he said Cordova inherited the challenges of the district leader who came before her.

“What I respected about her [approach to resolving the] strike was that we got through it quickly,” he said. “She made some hard choices and had to do a lot of changes.”

Even in the heat of bargaining, the superintendent was respectful to teachers, taking time to absorb their arguments, teacher Priscilla Shaw said. Cordova was always the “adult in the room,” Shaw added, describing her former boss’ personality as thoughtful, calm and

reflective.

Denver Public Schools ultimately cut more than 150 administrator roles at central office so millions could go toward raises for teachers and district staff.

After the strike, Cordova continued listening to teacher concerns, Gould said.

“We came out the other side, and she just really brought this attitude of thoughtful listening,” he said. “We had more access as teachers and as the union than we had ever had before.”

Cordova’s experience as a student, teacher and principal in Denver, gave her a unique perspective on the system, said Henry Roman, who served as the union’s president during the strike. She thought strategically about how system-wide decisions would impact teachers and students in the classroom.

Rena Honea, president of Dallas’ Alliance-AFT, said she’s had good interactions with Cordova, who has been open to listening and happy to meet with the educator’s union whenever asked.

Honea is impressed with Cordova’s background in the classroom, saying the number one criteria for a superintendent is being a former educator.

However, leading Dallas schools will be a challenge for anyone unfamiliar with the Texas and local education landscape as they need to quickly get up to speed.

“It takes a long time to get your real bearings in Dallas,” Honea said. “You have to know all the players, all the stakeholders, know history about the city ... and I just think it takes a long time for someone to be able to come in and balance all of that.”

The Denverite doesn’t have the same experience in Dallas classrooms as she did in Colorado. But Olson, a Denver school board member, touted Cordova’s ability to build relationships throughout the community.

Olson remembers Cordova making time to talk with those concerned about decisions like school closures or redesigns. One of the schools Olson taught at was labeled for such a transformation.

“She made sure she stayed and talked to all the parents and talked with us,” Olson said. “While I disagreed on the action the administrative team was taking, I did see the care and concern that she worked with families and the community and the neighborhood.”

Cordova believes in working collaboratively with teachers and leaders in the community -- and people who disagree with her, Olson stressed.

Disagreements with Denver’s board may have been the reason Cordova departed so soon into her leadership, however. After her unexpected resignation announcement, 14 former school board members signed on to an editorial characterizing the board’s dysfunction as an obstacle to Cordova’s vision for the district.

Focus on underserved students

As Denver's superintendent, Cordova focused closely on making sure the highest-need students had resources, several former colleagues said.

Such students were often those learning English as a second language. More than one-third of Denver's students are English language learners. Dallas also has a high enrollment of non-native English speakers at 45%.

When Olson started teaching in Denver, the focus was on kids learning English rather than on them being multilingual, she has said.

As superintendent, Cordova championed a mastery of multiple languages rather than an emphasis on just English. The Dallas deputy speaks Spanish after learning to do so as an adult. Cordova found it hard as a child to embrace her Latino culture in part because of negative messages that seemed to encourage leaving it behind, she said in a 2016 interview with Chalkbeat.

"I wanted to be the kind of educator who said to kids, 'You can be successful, you can have choices and you don't need to leave your community to do that,'" she said in the interview.

During the pandemic, Cordova frequently addressed parents on Facebook Live in both English and Spanish to disseminate information as widely as possible.

She also backed the district's Black Excellence resolution, which required all campuses to create plans to spotlight their students who identify as Black, African American, Afro Latino and multi-ethnic, Olson said.

Cordova prioritizes both equity and equality, said Shaw, who serves as the chair of the district's Asian Education Advisory Council.

"She cares about the educational progress of every single student, not just the majority, but the ones that tend to be overlooked," Shaw said.

In recent interviews, Cordova has highlighted Dallas' diverse students as one of the factors that drew her to the city.

"Dallas looks a lot more like the kind of district that motivated me to want to become a teacher," Cordova told The News last year. "Denver Public Schools today is much whiter and much wealthier than the Denver Public Schools I grew up in and I was teaching in."

What's next?

Many of the students Shaw described -- those from low-income families or who speak limited English -- are the ones struggling most with the pandemic's disruptions over the last two years. These are the kids who will require the greatest support in Dallas as school leaders aim to catch their students up.

The next superintendent will face new challenges. More than 40,000 Dallas students are in need of tutoring because of failed or missed state exams.

Hinojosa has already made Cordova a key leader in the pandemic recovery effort. At board meetings, he often defers to her to answer trustee questions or present on academic

acceleration initiatives.

Trustee Edwin Flores has been so impressed with what he's seen in the last year that he didn't even see a need for the board to look beyond Cordova.

“When you have an inside person ... it makes a lot of folks from the outside not want to apply for a very good reason,” Flores said earlier this year. “And when you have somebody as good as Susana Cordova, [the] bottom line is I'm not interested in doing a crazy search.”

Hinojosa is hoping a tour of the district with community meetings will give Cordova a chance to hear from families and students about their needs and them a chance to meet her.

In the recent community meetings, the superintendent has spoken to families about the initiatives he launched and developed in his time as superintendent, talking about early college high school opportunities and the district's pay-for-performance model.

But when it comes time to talk about the district's future recovery efforts, Hinojosa turns the microphone over to Cordova.

Who is Susana Cordova?

Hometown: Denver, Colorado

Education: Bachelor of Arts in English and French from the University of Denver (1988),
Master of Education from the University of Colorado-Denver (2000)

Background: Cordova started as a bilingual language arts teacher in 1989 before being promoted to the role of assistant principal in 1997. She rose through the ranks to become principal, director and executive director of teaching and learning, chief academic officer, chief schools officer, acting superintendent, deputy superintendent and superintendent all in Denver Public Schools. She left Denver to become Dallas' deputy superintendent in late 2020.

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Business/Economy

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Building ‘South Texas Triangle’? Geekdom Looks South To Recruit Startups

By Eric Killelea

San Antonio Express News

By 2011, Rackspace Technology co-founder Graham Weston had faced years of hiring problems in San Antonio.

Rackspace struggled to find workers for its Windcrest headquarters largely because the area had few early- and mid-stage technology companies — seedbeds for the talent it needed to compete with Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and others.

The cloud computing company also was losing employees to businesses in Austin, Silicon Valley and other tech centers.

Weston, Rackspace's chairman at the time, decided to do something about it. He helped launch Geekdom, a for-profit coworking space in the Rand Building on East Houston. Its aim was to foster startups and pair up entrepreneurs with mentors. They learned how to secure investment capital, develop and market their products and services, and manage their businesses.

"The city needed a startup community so when people have ideas they can see them live and thrive," Weston said.

More than a decade after its founding, Geekdom touts numerous success stories. But the difficulty of attracting tech workers remains. Within Texas, entrepreneurs and highly skilled employees are still more likely to choose Austin, Dallas or Houston over San Antonio.

Especially Austin, which has attracted the headquarters of electric vehicle maker Tesla and enterprise software company Oracle, as well as Google, Amazon and Facebook satellite offices.

So Geekdom is trying something new to attract tech talent and startups: It's looking south.

CEO Charles Woodin said Geekdom's game plan is to search for startups in South Texas and Mexico and develop partnerships with them.

He's looking to appeal to the culture of what he calls "the South Texas Triangle" — which encompasses the cities of Laredo, Corpus Christi and Guadalajara, Mexico. He's banking on San Antonio's standing as the largest Hispanic-majority city in the United States.

"San Antonio is very uniquely placed as a cultural epicenter for Latino and Hispanic cultures," Woodin said. "It's a very relatable city."

Geekdom's South Texas Triangle is a riff on the storied Texas Triangle, the major points of which are San Antonio, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston. Its combined gross domestic product in 2018 was \$1.3 trillion, accounting for 6.3 percent of the U.S. economy, according to the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Houston's Rice University.

Geekdom's first recruitment trip is scheduled for this month. Woodin will travel with representatives from the local investment group Alamo Angels and the nonprofit bioscience accelerator VelocityTX to meet with city officials in Harlingen, McAllen and Brownsville.

"What I would love for Geekdom's role to be in this is to identify resources that exist in those areas to figure out what kind of partnerships we can create," he said.

At an open house Feb. 23, Woodin told a crowd of tenants, staffers and supporters that Geekdom's goal was to launch 500 startups over the next decade, with at least 75 percent of them headquartered in San Antonio.

Lorenzo Gomez III, a former Geekdom CEO and its current board chairman, said the outsize number of startups made sense because most fail, even when funded. "We need volume," he added.

Referring to Geekdom's South Texas-Mexico strategy, Gomez said: "We want to be the

people that dominate this market.”

Standing close by, Weston said he supported Geekdom’s plans because the city hasn’t birthed enough startups to develop a vibrant tech scene. His main interest was whether the coworking space could identify businesses willing to put down local roots.

“Having a headquarters in San Antonio is what we should be aiming for,” he said. “To set up a headquarters means a company builds the brain power of the city. The best way for that to happen is for us to chart our own course.”

Progress, but VC lacking

On a nearby table, a Geekdom report described how San Antonio has opened its doors over the past decade, with tech companies moving into Port San Antonio on the Southwest Side and the near-downtown Pearl district, as well as software businesses such as Jungle Disk and Dura Software that have settled in the inner city.

Geekdom has 1,300 paying members, and 800 member companies have raised \$422.7 million in investment capital and created 2,489 local jobs over the past decade, according to the report.

Last year, Geekdom’s Startup Weekend hosted 102 participants who pitched their business ideas. Its in-house Legal Clinic helped more than 100 businesses file to become limited liability companies. And in the last four years, its Pre-Accelerator Program has helped 21 companies raise investments totaling \$53.3 million, and its Community Fund invested \$420,000 in 20 startups.

Despite the success stories, San Antonio remains hamstrung by venture capitalists’ lack of interest in local startups — one of the main reasons entrepreneurs bypass the city.

In 2019 and 2020, VC firms invested a combined \$105 million in 46 local deals, according to Crunchbase, which tracks tech funding. In the same period, Austin companies took in more than 20 times that amount — \$2.25 billion — in 620 deals.

Dallas companies: \$1.9 billion in 213 deals.

Houston startups: \$1.2 billion in 193 deals.

‘The Texas Manifesto’

Geekdom’s CEO said he’d looked south before.

In 2017, he began talking to Corpus Christi’s economic development officials, who were looking to make “a big push” to create a startup incubator. But Hurricane Harvey hit north of Corpus Christi that summer, and they shelved plans for the incubator, at least for the time being.

In 2019, Woodin met with officials in Guadalajara, where a tech boom inspired the nickname Mexico’s Silicon Valley. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit.

His proposed South Texas Triangle plan resembles one already staked out by the Capital Factory, a coworking space in Austin.

In 2017, Capital Factory CEO Joshua Baer wrote “The Texas Manifesto,” in which he called on Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio “to connect together entrepreneurs, investors, customers, talent and press in meaningful ways.”

Capital Factory is expected to open a location in the cybersecurity hub at Port San Antonio.

“Capital Factory is going to be a conduit for us to be part of the greater ‘Texas Manifesto,’” Woodin said. “But I feel like there’s so much for us to continue to focus on to do for our own success here.”

“We need to focus on what San Antonio is doing in the South Texas Triangle,” he said.

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North Texas Restaurants And Bars Are Severing Russian Ties

By Claire Ballor

Dallas Morning News

Signs of the crisis unfolding 6,000 miles away in Ukraine are showing up on North Texas menus as bars and restaurants do away with Russian products. Or, at least, what they think are Russian products.

After Gov. Greg Abbott asked Texas retailers to remove all Russian goods from their shelves, many bars and restaurants made announcements that they would no longer serve Russian foods and spirits, but some are removing liquors that aren’t actually Russian.

“It’s been an interesting exercise because many vodkas may have a Russian name, but they’re not actually made in Russia, so we want to be very careful that we are not hurting those businesses outside of Russia,” said Emily Williams Knight, president and CEO of the Texas Restaurant Association.

Nearly a dozen states have banned the sale of Russian vodkas. But the move is really symbolic rather than economic as Russian-imported vodkas made up less than 2% of all vodka imports in the U.S. in 2021, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

Vodka brands like Stolli and Smirnoff, which are Russian in name but produced elsewhere, are being dropped by businesses looking to sever any Russian ties.

Dallas Hale, the president and CEO of Shell Shack and Sushi Marquee, said he and his team made the call to stop serving Russian vodka at all of their restaurants, which was “an easy decision,” but the vodka brand they did away with is Stolli, a Latvian vodka company that has vocalized its support for Ukraine and condemned the Russian invasion.

It’s unclear if Shell Shack and Sushi Marquee will continue to keep Stolli off their drink menus.

At Apothecary, a cocktail bar on Lower Greenville, a \$500 caviar service called the Kremlin is now called Mariinsky Palace, named after the ceremonial residence of Ukraine’s president.

Tanner Agar, co-owner of Apothecary, said they serve wild-caught golden caviar with scallop

bottarga, cured egg yolk, a glass potato chip, chives, red onion crème fraîche and two martinis.

“It’s designed to really embrace the luxury of caviar and martinis, and the Kremlin seemed like the perfect place to name it after,” he said. “But starting last week, we had a conversation about how it felt so disingenuous to who we are and to our responsibility to the community to continue to promote the Kremlin in light of these activities.”

So they swapped the name out with a Ukrainian one, stopped sourcing Russian caviar, and no longer make the martinis with Beluga vodka, which is actually made in Russia. They’re in the process of sourcing a Ukrainian vodka to use in its place.

Agar said for the month of March, all profits from the Mariinsky will go to Ukrainian relief efforts.

Other bars and restaurants are getting creative in their ways of supporting Ukraine.

Fort Brewery in Fort Worth made a new brew, Molotov, and is donating a portion of proceeds to the Pravda Beer Theatre in Lviv, Ukraine — a craft brewery that is now churning out Molotov cocktails in glass bottles instead of beer.

Oak Lawn bar Alexandre’s created a layered blue and yellow shot called the “[Expletive] Putin” and is donating all proceeds from the drink to aid groups helping Ukrainians, like Chef José Andrés’ World Central Kitchen organization, which is operating meal sites at border crossings in Poland.

In Austin, the Russian owner of a restaurant called the Russian House changed the name to just House as an act of solidarity with Ukrainians.

Another restaurant in Arlington recently underwent a branding change after receiving threats. A Taste of Europe had a sign that read “Restaurant, Grocery, Russian Gifts” but the word “Russian” is now blacked out and a Ukrainian flag hangs in the window.

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CERAWeek, The Davos Of The Energy Industry, Returns To Houston In Moment Of Profound Change

By James Osborne
Houston Chronicle

For 40 years world leaders, energy ministers and oil and gas executives have flooded into downtown Houston to discuss the future of the world’s energy system at the CERAWeek by S&P Global conference. After a two-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, the annual conference returns to Houston Monday.

One of those leading the discussion this year is Carlos Pascual, a former U.S. ambassador to Mexico and Ukraine who advised Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry on energy while Kerry was secretary of state.

Now a senior vice president at S&P Global, Pascual says the energy sector is in a moment of profound change not seen in decades. The confluence of climate change, increasing

international tensions and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought the industry to a critical inflection point, he says.

We sat down with Pascual to talk about how energy companies are progressing toward net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in the decades ahead, and what the Russian invasion of Ukraine could mean for the future of not only the energy system but the global economy.

Q: You've been involved in a number of CERAWeeks over the years. How does this one compare to past, considering everything going on right now?

A: There's never been a CERAWeek with more happening in the world at a greater pace of change than we see today. One part of it is the recovery from the pandemic and what the energy world and global economy have been through. We have an unprecedented movement to net zero connected to climate change. We have seen a short term energy crisis in Europe and Asia that raises questions about the future of energy supply. We have an unprecedented clash that could result in a war in the heart of Europe. That's what we're trying to focus CERAWeek on this year, to help those participating understand the phenomenal pace of change.

Q: It's early stages in this conflict, but what do you see as the potential ramifications for energy prices? The U.S. and its allies are so far resisting placing sanctions on Russian oil and gas, but are there other factors to consider here?

A: We haven't seen a conflict like this since World War II, and it presents challenges to the entire world. Europe is the first region of the world to be affected, and it could have a massive impact on European energy security. There are questions on what happens to exports. The likelihood this will significantly, if not massively affect energy markets around the world is extraordinarily high. The implication for prices, for stability, for economic growth could rock the global economy in ways we have never truly experienced given the global nature of this security crisis in front of us today

Q: We've had a number of wars in recent decades, many in the Middle East. Why are the stakes for energy and the larger world so much higher here?

A: Russia is such a critical component of the global economy. It's a major supplier of gas to Europe and one of the three largest oil suppliers in the world. For Russia to stop exporting its oil would have massive impact on global energy prices. Russia is also seeking a redefinition of the European security order where it seeks to determine the rights of countries to determine their sovereignty and national borders. Inevitably, China has to be watching the development in Europe, considering the implication for its future posture on Taiwan.

On HoustonChronicle.com: Oil closes above \$100 a barrel first time since 2014 as Russia's war worsens supply concerns

Q: Do you think Europe is at the point now, after so many years of Russia hanging natural gas supplies over their head, that they're looking to turn away from Russian gas? And what choice do they realistically have?

A: Medium and long term Europe is seeking to reduce dependence on gas from Russia and more broadly gas all together, as they seek to transition to renewable energy. The challenge is

those transitions take time. In the short term, how does Europe meet its gas demand if there is a cutoff or decrease in Russian supply? Already we've seen unprecedented increases in prices, where at one point the prices of gas were ranging from \$150 to \$300 for the equivalent of a barrel of oil.

Q: Climate change and the energy transition has been a focal point of CERAWEEK for a number of years now. What if any significant change do you see on that front over the last 12 months?

A: First, countries representing 90 percent of global GDP and global emissions have now committed to net zero at some point in the future. There has been incredible movement in that direction that indicates this is a process of change that is irreversible. Secondly, there's the development we've seen in the financial sector. ESG (environment, sustainability and governance) indicators have become a dominant factor in investment choices. Increasingly we're seeing capital flow to clean tech. Lastly is the diversification in the energy sector itself, as we see oil and gas companies around the world pledging net zero, creating low carbon units and beginning to prepare themselves for a world that is demanding diversification of energy sources. Those three things have accelerated in the past year in a way that we have not seen in decades.

Q: Some of the oil CEOs have been warning that this energy transition has the potential to cause huge spikes in energy prices, as investment in fossil fuels declines. Are they right or are they spinning this to protect their business?

A: This is a critical issue. The danger of the transition is investment in hydrocarbons may contract at a pace that doesn't keep track with changes in demand. It's much harder to change demand than it is supply. The impact could be high energy prices, which we've seen already. This danger of under investment and the impact it can have on market stability is very real and something companies have to be conscious of as they structure their future investments.

Q: Some people think it's happening already, that this recent price spike is driven in part by under investment in oil and gas? Do you agree?

A: There are many factors effecting volatility in the market, not least of which is the recovery from the pandemic. In 2021, we saw an unprecedented increase in demand, and the challenge is can supply keep up with that pace. Investors are inevitably going to be guided by long term perspectives that are affected by ESG factors like climate change. We will see markets adjust to these changing realities, but those change can take time and when you have gaps in the market they can create uncertainty.

Q: As they seek to reduce emissions, oil and gas are keying in on certain technologies, not the least of which is hydrogen? What do you see as the potential there considering all the other competing clean energy technologies?

A: Hydrogen has become one of the most talked about technologies and fuel alternatives in the energy world. Hydrogen hubs have become particularly important because they potentially bring together hard to abate industries like steel and cement. One of the critical questions for the oil and gas industry is, can they bring the engineering skills and ability to operate at scale to help transform this industry? There are few industries in the world if any that have that ability. This is a huge opportunity for the oil and gas industry to be able to demonstrate the

role they need to play in the energy transition.

Q: What about carbon capture and storage, another technology being hyped by the oil majors. BP and Exxon Mobil both are developing major plans for this technology. But carbon capture has always struggled by virtue of enormous cost. How do they change this?

A: Oil and gas companies are bringing together their skills and capabilities to reduce emissions in a way that has never occurred in the past. Today, competitiveness in oil and gas is not just about lowest cost but lowest emissions. The ability to effectively develop carbon capture programs can be a game changer in the energy transition. As a result of that, oil and gas companies are devoting huge resources to developing carbon capture hubs, which you see in the Houston area, bringing together not only oil but industries like steel and cement, as they try to reduce their emissions.

Q: We hear a lot of climate change discussion from the oil majors and some of the larger national oil companies like Aramco. But what about the smaller national oil companies? Are they taking steps to reduce emissions or are they just waiting to see what their larger competitors come up with?

A: Consistently we've heard from emerging economies their economic realities are not understood. They make up a fraction of global emissions, and if they can't develop their oil and gas resources, they will not be able to expand energy to their populations and have the economic opportunities other countries have had. In many cases, the opportunity to transition to natural gas from diesel or wood would not only reduce emissions, but also would improve the health of women cooking with firewood in enclosed spaces. They need international partners, and the concern they have is the pressures against oil and gas politically may discourage international energy companies from investing in emerging economies and bringing their technological capability.

Q: All of that said, is the UN's goal of getting the world to net zero emissions by 2050 achievable? Considering the degree to which the world relies on fossil fuels, with little carbon capture infrastructure to speak of, is it realistic to reduce emissions so rapidly?

The goals that have been set for the energy transition, particularly for 2050, will require an acceleration of technological change the world has never seen. Even today, there are not commercially viable technologies available to achieve half the emissions reductions called for by 2050. That implies an incredible acceleration not only in technology, but also the supply chains that have to go with them, from nickel to lithium to cobalt. The long term direction of capital recognizes there must be a change in the course of investment to address climate change. At the same time, there are realities of energy security that must be met during the transition. If nothing else, we must think about the political realities of the impact volatility in energy prices has on a voting electorate.

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[Transportation](#)

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Southwest Airlines Commits To \$250 Million Expansion At Houston Hobby Airport By Kyle Arnold

Dallas Morning News

Southwest Airlines is pushing for a \$250 million expansion at Houston Hobby Airport, a move that could further boost the Texas airport's stature with the Dallas-based carrier.

Houston's city council approved a \$20 million payment for design and preliminary work on the seven gate expansion at Houston's smaller airport and Southwest plans to pay for the rest of the \$230 million in advance. Southwest wants six of those gates for domestic flights and the other gate would be used by various airlines for international departures.

"We're working collaboratively with the Houston Airport System to design a seven-gate expansion to Hobby Airport's west concourse," said Southwest spokesman Dan Landson. "The action approved by the Houston City Council allows us to move forward with defining and designing the project."

The project will likely take four to five years to complete.

Houston Hobby has been an important cog in Southwest's flight network, the seventh busiest airport for the airline with about 131 flights a day in March, according to flight schedule service Diio by Cirium. Houston was a part of Southwest Airlines' original Texas triangle business model, which launched the airlines with flights between Houston, Dallas and San Antonio.

Like many of Southwest's key stops, Houston Hobby is that city's smaller airport with about 6.5 million passengers getting on flights there in 2019, making it slightly less busy than Dallas Love Field, where Southwest Airlines is headquartered. Houston's other airport, George Bush Intercontinental, gets about three times as many passengers as Hobby.

Southwest's commitment to Hobby comes even after the airline started flights out of nearby Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport in April 2021.

But the airline has placed more emphasis on Houston Hobby in recent years, starting with a \$156 million, five-gate expansion in 2013 and then a new 240,000-square-foot hangar the company opened in 2020. Much of that growth is because Southwest has made Houston Hobby its launching point for international flights to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Southwest has 11 international flights a day out of Houston Hobby, mostly to Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. In all, Southwest flies to 63 destinations out of Houston Hobby, compared to nine out of Houston Intercontinental.

While both Dallas and Houston each have two airports, it's where the comparisons end thanks to the complicated laws that limit Dallas Love Field.

Houston Hobby has 30 gates, compared to 20 at Dallas. The expansion would give Houston Hobby 37, nearly twice as many as Dallas Love Field, where Southwest flies more often.

International flights aren't permitted from Love Field, thanks to the amended Wright Amendment rules that harken back to the creation of DFW International Airport. Also,

Southwest Airlines can't expand to DFW Airport without giving up gates at Love Field.

Southwest doesn't have any of those restrictions in Houston, where both the airports are run by the city.

"Last year, Southwest Airlines relaunched service at Bush Airport, reaffirming their commitment to Houston," said Houston Airports chief operating officer Jim Szczesniak. "They have many options when it comes to future growth across their network, so we are very excited that they are committed to expanding at Hobby Airport."

While Southwest is paying for the project up front, Houston will reimburse the airline when the project is finished. Southwest and other airlines will pay back the city over time by renting gates and paying landing fees.

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Criminal Justice

Man Accused Of Online Child Sex Solicitation — 2 Days Before First Day As Bexar County Jailer

By Claire Bryan

San Antonio Express News

A 20-year-old man who the Bexar County Sheriff's Office had recently hired as a temporary jailer was arrested Saturday on a warrant for online solicitation of a minor with intent for sexual contact.

The man, Alucard Harris, had been slated to start work on Monday but his conditional offer of employment was withdrawn after his arrest, the sheriff's office said.

Patrol deputies were called to a home in far west Bexar County after an outcry by the victim, who was able to identify Harris via Snapchat, the sheriff's office said in a news release Sunday evening. The release did not say when the outcry occurred.

Investigators later learned Harris was an applicant for a job at the jail, the release said. Harris's bond was set at \$100,000 for the second-degree felony.

The office's Child Safe detectives are asking anyone who has been a victim of Harris to contact them at 210-335-6070 or BCSOTIPS@bexar.org.

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Pedestrian Killed By San Antonio Police Department Vehicle

By Claire Bryan

San Antonio Express News

A pedestrian was struck and killed by a San Antonio Police Department vehicle as an officer was responding to a call on the city's West Side.

The man, 64, was crossing a poorly lit stretch of West Commerce Street about 8:30 p.m. Saturday in the 6100 block near NW 39th Street, and didn't yield to oncoming traffic, police said. He was wearing dark clothing and the officer didn't see him in the roadway.

The police vehicle was headed east on a call when it hit the pedestrian, who landed in a grassy area. The officer stopped and notified 911, but the pedestrian did not survive his injuries. EMS pronounced him dead at the scene.

The officer is a two-year veteran with the police department. Police said an investigation is underway and did not release the names of the pedestrian or the officer.

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National News

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Florida Joins Growing List Of States To Follow Texas' Lead In Passing New Abortion Restrictions

By BeLynn Hollers

Dallas Morning News

As President Joe Biden's administration promises to protect abortion access nationwide, states continue to pass legislation that further restricts abortion, including Florida last week.

While some states have tried to enact bills similar to Texas' Senate Bill 8, which bans abortion after approximately six weeks and has a civil enforcement mechanism, some Republican-led states have opted for a less restrictive ban.

On Thursday, legislators in Florida passed a bill that would restrict abortions before 15 weeks — similar to a Mississippi law being challenged in the Supreme Court.

The Mississippi case, *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health*, is expected to be decided by the nation's highest court in June. Many experts anticipate the court will uphold the law, which would overturn the 49-year-old ruling in *Roe vs. Wade* legalizing abortion up to viability across the nation.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is expected to sign the new legislation into law. The state currently allows abortions up to 24 weeks. According to data provided by the state's senate, there were 68,449 abortions performed in 2021. Only 4,104 of those were performed from 13 to 24 weeks.

Vice President Kamala Harris said in a statement Friday that the Biden administration is opposed to the bill.

"The right of women to make decisions about their own bodies is non-negotiable. If signed into law, Florida's bill would violate the constitutional right to abortion that the Supreme Court has recognized for nearly 50 years. It will block access to crucial reproductive health care for Floridians, with a particular impact on low-income communities, communities of color, and rural communities," Harris said in the statement.

If DeSantis signs, the law would go into effect July 1.

In February, the Arizona Senate voted to approve a bill banning abortion after 15 weeks, also mirroring the Mississippi law. A copycat of Texas' six-week ban was introduced in the Arizona legislature in January, but it has not advanced.

Another development came Thursday as Idaho's Senate voted 28-6 on a Texas-style law banning abortion after six weeks, which could potentially make it the first state to successfully copy SB 8 in some form. The Idaho law, however, only allows lawsuits against abortion providers, while SB 8 allows suits against anyone who "aids or abets" an abortion.

Also on Thursday, the Supreme Court sided with Kentucky's attorney general in *Cameron, Attorney General of Kentucky vs. EMW Women's Surgical Center*, allowing the attorney general to resume a legal defense on Kentucky House Bill 454 in lower courts.

On Wednesday, an Ohio county court put a temporary restraining order on a new state law that makes it harder for abortion clinics to get licenses to operate. The order came because the department of health was prematurely enforcing the law. Ohio's Senate Bill 157 was signed into law by Gov. Mike DeWine on Dec. 22, 2021, and takes effect March 23.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region, ACLU, ACLU of Ohio, and Women's Med Dayton issued a statement praising the decision by the county court.

"The courts have confirmed again and again that these unnecessary restrictions pushed by Ohio politicians impose severe burdens on patients and providers. Today's decision is just one in this series of rulings that sees these technical licensing requirements for what they are — dangerous laws with no other intention than to eliminate access to abortion in Southwest Ohio," the organizations said in the statement.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton issued a statement Friday alleging U.S. Health and Human Services was illegally allocating funds for abortions through the family planning program.

"The Biden Administration has tried to make a mockery of our constitutional rights, but I will hold them accountable for illegally using taxpayer dollars to fund and encourage abortions," Paxton said. "I will not allow them to appropriate state funding under the guise of 'family planning' while clearly violating congressional statutes."

On March 1, lawmakers in Georgia's Senate passed legislation called the Women's Health and Safety Act, which bans chemical abortion pills being prescribed through telemedicine and requires an in-person examination. The bill mirrors a law enacted in Texas on Dec. 1.

A study released in February by the Guttmacher Institute, an organization that studies reproductive health policy, showed that for the first time in the nation's history, pills accounted for the majority of U.S. abortions.

March 1 also marked the vote for the Women's Health Protection Act, which failed to receive enough votes in the starkly divided U.S. Senate. The measure failed 46 to 48, with Texas Senators Ted Cruz and John Cornyn voting against the procedural debate.

The bill would have cemented Roe vs. Wade into federal law and established a woman's legal right to an abortion through Congress. If it had passed, the law would have nullified Texas' six-week ban along with other state laws that restrict abortion.

In addition, March 1 marked six months since SB 8 was enacted, and it has survived many legal challenges already. On Dec. 10, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law while allowing one limited challenge regarding state medical licensing officials to play out.

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Opinion/Editorial

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Problems Fighting Human Trafficking Extend Beyond Texas Ag's Office

By Bridget Grumet

Austin American Statesman

The Legislature gave the Texas attorney general's office a massive cash infusion in recent years to combat human trafficking. The funding for the trafficking division surged from \$740,000 in 2019 to more than \$3 million in 2022.

Unfortunately, Texas has very little to show for it.

The attorney general's office closed only four human trafficking cases over the past two years. Two cases resulted in convictions. The other two were handled as deferred adjudications, a type of probation that typically keeps the person from having a conviction on their record.

The Houston Chronicle, which recently unearthed this paltry prosecution record, pointed to dysfunctions within the agency. Staff turnover. Shifting priorities away from training.

Undoubtedly those issues made a difficult job even harder. But I'd like to pan out from the windows of the attorney general's office and take the big-picture view of Texas, a state where University of Texas researchers estimate 234,000 adults are trafficked for their labor, largely in the agricultural sector, and nearly 79,000 minors and young adults are sexually exploited for profit.

We know which groups of people are at greater risk for trafficking: People who are homeless. Youth in (or exiting) the foster care system. Migrant workers, especially those who are undocumented.

And let's face it, Texas can be a hostile place for those folks.

Knowing lawmakers have criminalized homeless camping, knowing the state continues to fail some foster kids in jaw-dropping ways, knowing the governor has championed aggressive policing of the border, would you expect people in any of those groups to flag down authorities to ask for help?

Even the easiest thing is controversial

A young woman told UT researchers that a pimp took her from Houston to Austin to trade sex

for money.

She had spent three years in foster care, a system that failed to provide her with a safe path into adulthood. She was sexually assaulted at age 17, with no support after that trauma. She had no skills, no way to make money to keep a roof over her head. She turned to prostitution to survive.

UT researchers saw recurring themes when they interviewed her and 45 other sexually exploited Texas youth for the 2019 report “To the Public, Nothing was Wrong with Me.” Financial strain, especially among people leaving foster care, juvenile detention or unstable homes, often pushed people into trafficking situations.

More money for police or prosecutors won’t change that.

“There’s often a focus on fixing the problem after it’s happened,” Matt Kammer-Kerwick, one of the UT researchers involved in the 2019 study, told me. “But there’s all this stuff upstream that can be done.”

Improving Texas’ deeply troubled foster care system is an obvious, if difficult, one.

Ensuring youth can better access housing, health care and employment opportunities would be a game changer.

Even doing something as simple as educating teens on healthy relationships could help them avoid or exit toxic ones.

“Education about healthy relationships in school — that’s proven to be effective in (preventing) dating and domestic violence situations,” Kammer-Kerwick said. “It allows students and family members to learn more about what social norms are appropriate, to help separate misconceptions about what people should expect in relationships with other humans.”

Yet even in Texas that is controversial.

Last June, Gov. Greg Abbott vetoed a broadly supported, bipartisan bill that would have required school districts to teach students about dating violence, family violence and human trafficking.

His priority, he said, was to “safeguard parental rights regarding this type of instruction.”

Abbott later signed off on a revised version that requires parents to opt-in for their kids to receive basic information that could keep them safe.

Time for Texas to look in the mirror

My mind keeps coming back to another person UT researchers interviewed in that 2019 report: a 23-year-old transgender woman from Houston who continued to support herself through prostitution.

“My family is rich so I feel like, why do I have to do sex work when my family is rich,” she told researchers. “They don’t want to help me out because I’m transgender, they keep me out of the house and everything.”

January was National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Abbott tweeted or retweeted about it 21 times that month. There was a prayer vigil. A day to wear blue to promote awareness.

“The State of Texas is committed to working with local communities to eradicate the heinous crime of human trafficking and ensure justice for survivors,” Abbott tweeted Jan. 11.

Our state embraces survivors in the abstract. But Abbott and other Republican leaders do not stand up for LGTBQ people like the 23-year-old trans woman in Houston.

In recent years GOP officials have tried to legislate bathroom access and considered measures that would have allowed discrimination against LGTBQ Texans. Now they’re pressing to investigate parents seeking medical care for transgender kids.

They push these exclusionary policies, then look away as some of the people they have marginalized become prey for sex traffickers.

Trafficking thrives when people are swept into the shadows, left with no other options. Our state could do so much more to welcome the most vulnerable into the light.

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UNT Speaker Protest Shows Weakness Of Free Speech On Campus

Dallas Morning News

It’s one thing to disagree with someone’s point of view. It’s another thing, especially on a college campus where the exploration of ideas is critical to learning, to prevent that person from speaking at all and to force them to leave under the protection of police.

We disagree with many of the things Republican political candidate Jeff Younger stands for. And the way he expresses them is often offensive. But the notion that he should be shouted down and then chased off the campus of the University of North Texas, as he was Wednesday night, is not acceptable.

Younger has been in a high-profile custody battle over his child. He and his ex-wife disagree that the child is transgender. Younger is now running for Texas House District 63 on a platform of criminalizing gender-affirming care. When he showed up to speak at an event sponsored by the UNT branch of the Young Conservatives of Texas, he was met by scores of angry protesters whose behavior was so aggressive that police had to intervene.

Students shouted, chanted obscenities, banged on desks, and made vulgar gestures for half an hour, preventing Younger from speaking, according to multiple reports.

According to a statement from UNT President Neal Smatresk, protesters were “swarming police, who were working to safely escort both the guest speaker and student organizers off campus. DPS was called in to assist with maintaining safety.”

One of the student organizers, Kelly Neidert, who said she had received threats of violence in the days leading up to the event, told our reporter she hid in a janitor’s closet while police

improvised a plan for her evacuation.

It shouldn't surprise us that this happened on a college campus, even if we are ashamed it took place in North Texas. After all, these students are only following the example set for them by their elders. We seem to have lost the ability to debate ideas, especially difficult ideas that involve our culture. That's an especially harmful loss on college campuses which have a centuries-long history of providing spaces where ideas compete. College is supposed to be the place for expanded thought, not thought police.

According to a 2021 report by The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), 66% of American university students believe it's acceptable to shout down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus, which is exactly what happened here. And 23% of students say it's acceptable to use violence to stop campus speech. We're grateful that faction didn't win out Wednesday.

We want to be clear: We strongly disagree with Younger's position that parents should face criminal charges for providing their children health care that is often prescribed by doctors. Parents seeking medical best practices for the care of their transgender children should not be treated as criminals. And young people, indeed all people, experiencing gender dysphoria should be treated with compassion and love.

Younger's thoughts are disturbing and even condemnable. According to UNT student journalist Ismael Belkoura who live-tweeted the event, Younger made light of suicide among the transgender population, which is higher than the general population. He also egged on the protesters, shouting, "Come on, communists. Let's go commies."

Had he been allowed to continue to speak, rather than being chased away under threat, it's clear that his ugly thoughts and words would be the focus, rather than those of intolerant and threatening protesters.

The irony here is that there appeared to be very few Younger supporters at the event. If Younger and a little knot of three or four acolytes had simply been ignored, as they deserve, his nasty rhetoric wouldn't have gotten the national attention it's getting now.

In a way, both parties got what they wanted: a spectacle. Neither side was there to engage in healthy debate. Around the world and right here in Texas, there are serious thinkers pursuing the best possible treatment for gender dysphoria, but none of those voices were heard at UNT on Wednesday night.

On the campus of a public university, Younger had a right to express his views. And students had a right to disagree, even protest. But this protest went too far, is likely to harm the cause it was meant to promote, and signals that free speech on college campuses is indeed endangered.

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