

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR NORTH TEXAS DEMOCRATS

January 25, 2015

Garland, Texas

Edition 1, Volume 2

We Can! We Are!



The State of the Union Address

The U.S. is healing. The economy is improving, more people are finding jobs, more children are graduating from high school, and we are less dependent on foreign oil. Alternative energy is gaining traction. The deficit is cut by two-thirds, the stock market has doubled, and health care inflation at its lowest rate in 50 years. Wages are starting to rise again.

The President believes in a smarter kind of American leadership combining military power with strong diplomacy. Instead of sending large ground forces overseas, we're partnering with nations from to deny safe haven to terrorists who threaten America.

We defend free speech, condemn persecution of humans. We do these things because they are the right thing to do. Ultimately they will make us safer.

Our greatest challenge and greatest threat to future generations is climate change. The best scientists in the world are telling us our activities are changing the climate. The U.S will double the pace at which we will cut carbon pollution. China has committed to limit their emissions.

Our actions tell every child, in every neighborhood, your life matters; we are committed to improving your life. Future generations must know we are a people who see our differences as a great gift, that we're a people who value the dignity and worth of every citizen — man and woman, young and old.

We are more than a collection of red states and blue states; there isn't a liberal America or a conservative America; a black America or a white America — but a United States of America. — President Barack Obama, SOTU 2015

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GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

EDITORIAL

Towards the Slave/Massa Society ...

The GOP'pers with the Tea Party are hellbent to continue their path of destruction of the hard won accomplishments of not only the Obama presidency, but the accomplishments of our history. The carnage has been done in the name of a lily white deity whose actual heritage was Aramaic, a middle eastern person of color. The quest to quash rights has and is incessant. Women are second class citizens, subject to the will of men, only worth about 75 percent of men's earnings, not capable of making decisions about their bodies and health even in the case of domestic violence, rape and incest. The poor, the immigrants, are said to be takers, parasites in entitlements and employment. The elderly are no longer capable of anything of value and therefore the economy killing programs of Social Security and Medicare must go. Kill Obamacare.

What of jobs? Ship them overseas - oops, out source them overseas. And while they're at it, ship company resources out of the country and avoid those taxes (suggested place: the address on Seychelles where 16,000 businesses have headquarters). Let's not forget education and the insistence that the only way to provide quality education is to privatize schools via charter schools and vouchers under the guise of giving parents choices. Reagan Trickle-Down economics of tax breaks for the rich and increasing taxes for the poor will work, *this time*. The environment. End the EPA and it's industry-economy-killing regulations. Eliminate the unions in the name of "Right to Work." The unions who fought for and won the 40 hour week, equal rights, job security, pensions and so much more. Eminent Domain? At the hands and will of the big business. Land ownership be damned in the name of the will of business. Couple this with control of water to those who can pay any price. Increase the military budget to the point of spending millions on stuff even the military says it doesn't want or need. This names a few of the GOP'pers, and a few of the turncoat Dems plans. This surely will end the middle class - broke, hungry, landless and poisoned.

When and if these goals are accomplished, the U.S. will once again be a slave/massa society. "The Man" also known as Midas will live in the big house, master of the slaves under his control. But wait, how much money will it take when the air is so polluted, breathing is impossible? How much money will it cost to get water when the aquifers, rivers, lakes and streams are all too poisoned or dry? How good will money be when the earth, the soil, is also poisoned and unable to support growth? Will the new name for plantations be, "Tower of Babel?"

Ah, that this could be only a cautionary tale. Unfortunately, a cautionary tale only warns of a possible unpleasant ending. Destruction of life, land and liberty is a certainty if we continue on our current path. The attack is now, not when or if. We are being attacked on every front. Can anything be done to stop this onslaught of evil? I don't know. However, this will not stop my quest to stop the nefarious plans of the GOP'pers, the Tea Party, or the renegade dems. I know I am not alone. Will you join us?

— Rachel Baker Ford, editor

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

ARTICLE

River Toll Road of Doubt – Dallas Trinity Parkway

— Willa Kulhavy

A 1997 Major Investment Study identified the construction of a new roadway in the Trinity River area as one of several projects that would relieve congestion near downtown Dallas at the connections between highway I-35E, Texas highway 175, and I-30.

Whee! Oops! The Trinity Parkway road will be in the Trinity flood plain west of downtown Dallas. Watch out Oak Cliff, Trinity Forest, and all the folks downriver.

Well, it would help the people who have to drive that stretch and have the money to pay the tolls. There will be holes dug for the road bed and those holes will be made into lakes, grass will be sown and soccer laid out. This is according to the information provided to voters in 2007 and is shown in pictures on NTTA's site for the Trinity Project.

For detailed aerial maps with street names and pictures of where excavation to create lakes would be created, go to NTTA's site, future projects, Trinity Parkway and to see a detailed map showing the excavation sites for lakes, scroll down to schematic Drawings (February 2014) on the following site for presentation information. <https://www.ntta.org/roadsprojects/futproj/trihwy/Pages/Project-Meeting-Materials.aspx>

In a 1998 ballot initiative, voters approved \$84 million for the Trinity Parkway Project. Per an agreement between NTTA and the City of Dallas, a second election in 2007, critics say, was confusing because checking "yes" on the ballot meant a voter was against the road and voting "no" meant they were for it.

Roughly 80 Percent of Funding Hasn't Been Identified.

In 2007, then-Mayor Tom Leppert repeatedly said that federal officials assured him that running the road between the levees would be safe and cost-efficient. Records obtained after the election instead showed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a stern warning to the city that it had concerns that the road would jeopardize the levees.

The road will run inside the Trinity River levees for about 6.2 miles. There will be a flood wall between it and the river for about one-third of that length, near downtown. But the road could still flood in a 100-year storm. See: <http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/2014/12/10-things-to-know-about-trinity-parkway.html/>

D Magazine which came out in 2005 in favor of the Parkway as an integral part of the larger Trinity River Corridor Project, said, "we were wrong. Putting a road in a floodway was a bad idea." And, "The road was going to be built with funds from the city, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA). Estimates put the cost at somewhere around \$1.5 billion. In 1998, Dallas voters approved \$84 million in bond funds for the Parkway.

So right now we're about \$1.416 billion short. Suppose Governor Abbott will send us the difference from the rainy day fund?

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Further reading on this folly can be found in the *D magazine* and the May 14, 2014. *Observer* article by Jim Schutze reporting his conversation with Wick Allison, owner of *D Magazine*.

<http://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2014/may/trinity-parkway-toll-road-is-dead>

<http://www.dallasobserver.com/2014-05-15/news/how-d-magazine-s-wick-allison-changed-his-mind-on-the-trinity-parkway/>

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

ARTICLE: SOCIAL SECURITY

The Republicans Pick on the Disabled

— Charles E. Ford, Jr.

Social Security retirement benefits come from payroll taxes and the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund (OASI). The OASI fund is worth about \$2.8 trillion dollars and is predicted to be solvent until 2035 when payments will exceed payroll tax revenues and the trust fund will be depleted. A reminder: the trust fund is mostly in the form of treasury notes so the Government must borrow the money when the trust fund cashes the notes in. The money is borrowed from China and other countries willing to buy United States Treasury notes.

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/TR/2014/tr2014.pdf>

The Social Security Administration (SSA) also provides monthly payments to disabled Americans. These payments come from a combination of payroll taxes and the Social Security Disability Insurance fund (SSDI). The SSDI fund is predicted to become insolvent in 2016. The payroll tax applied to DI hasn't been enough to cover the disability payments years so funds have been moved from the retirement (OASI) fund to the disability (SSDI) fund when needed with Congressional approval.

The Republicans have found a way to nibble away at the Disability payments without drawing attention to their actions. Instead of passing a law the House Rules Committee, led by Paul Ryan, has used a change in procedural rules to attack Disabled Americans. (No Democrats voted for House Resolution 5. 5 Democrats couldn't be bothered to vote.)

The new rule, House Resolution 5, Section 3, Subsection q, prohibits using funds from the Social Security (OASI) for other purposes unless another source of revenue is found to replace the funds or Social Security payments are reduced to maintain the solvency of the Social Security Trust fund. Increased taxes are the only other source of revenue and the present Congress won't allow that to happen. If funds are not transferred Disability payments will be reduced by about 20 percent to 11 million disabled Americans. Shifting just one tenth of 1 percent from OASI to SSDI will allow both trust funds to be solvent until 2033 according to Mark Miller. <http://retirementrevised.com/author/mjmillier/>

But wait, there's more. The real problem hasn't been fixed. If the House gets away with this there will be more under the table actions to destroy Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and the countless other programs designed to help families through tough times sometimes caused by poor life choices but mainly due to unemployment, business decision, natural disasters, or other events they cannot control.

The real problem is both Social Security trust funds will be depleted in less than 20 years and Congress is doing nothing to extend the life of the trust funds. At the end 2013 Social Security paid \$823 billion in benefits to 58 million people. Baby-boomers are just starting to retire, people are living longer, and the employment tax revenue is declining because the workforce is shrinking.

Changes must be made *NOW* or worrying about a cost of living increase will be the least of our worries. The topic of discussion will be how much is my Social Security shrinking this year? There are steps that can be taken immediately. They won't be popular but the sooner action is taken, the less severe the steps will be. The upper limit on wages subjected to the payroll tax can be eliminated. The amount of the payroll tax can be increased. The annual cost of living increases can be reduced or frozen for some time. The eligibility age for retirement benefits can be increased. Or Congress can get on board with some positive programs putting more people, taxpayers, to work on infrastructure programs.

Congress can change tax rules and delete subsidies that encourage corporations to move jobs overseas under the guise they create more jobs here. None of these individual items will solve the problem the 435 members of the House of Representatives, 100 Senators, and the President can pressure their staffs to solve the problems they are paid to solve. Of the 535 members of Congress, 268 are millionaires. I don't know how many earned their millions the old fashioned way — by inheriting it (like Senate candidate John Raese in 2010) but it is clear that not many understand the problems, or just don't care, or simply don't know how to analyze and solve problems.

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE ARTICLE



EPA Listens in Oklahoma City

On January 15, a bus loaded with thirty-three DFW citizens representing various groups traveled to Oklahoma City. The group's aim was to testify at an EPA hearing on its newly proposed Texas-Oklahoma regional haze rule.

The hearing purpose was to take comment on the EPA's Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) to cut emissions or haze that affect visibility on national and regional parks in Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas. The majority of the pollution discussed is emitted by eight coal-fired power plant facilities in Texas, many of which are 30 to 40 years old.

The regional parks affected by this pollution include Big Bend National park, the Guadalupe Mountains in East Texas, the Caney Creek Wilderness in Arkansas, and the Wichita Wildlife Refuge near Lawton, Oklahoma.

The hearing comes on the heels of a rejected Texas air plan submitted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in 2009. The Texas plan didn't ask the utilities to make any real pollution upgrades and didn't expect compliance to be met until 2155.

Cleaning up the pollution with added controls from Texas coal-fired power plants will not only reduce the soot or particulates that contribute to haze, but will also reduce up to 228,000 tons of harmful sulfur dioxide.

Rita Beving, Conservation Co-Chair of the Dallas Sierra Club stated, "Cleaning up haze and SO₂ emission will help clear the air in DFW. It has been proven that the dirty plants of Monticello, Martin Lake, and Big Brown in East Texas contribute to DFW air pollution. After serving more than a decade on the North Texas Clean Air Steering Committee, where the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality continues to give us failed air plans, the coal plants have not been required to either clean up or shut down, this new rule may finally give our area some relief."

"Retrofitting plants with pollution controls or having these antiquated plants shut down are likely to not only reduce harmful SO₂, but will likely reduce nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which combine to form smog, but may reduce CO₂ and mercury as well. We applauded the EPA's recommendations and our message to these coal plants putting on new pollution controls is 'Either put up, clean up, or simply shut down.'"

Collin County Democrat Bob Fusinato summed up most of the hearing's sentiments of those who would rather many of the old plants close. He referred to putting new pollution controls on the 40-plus year old coal plants saying, "You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig. You might as well shut these old plants down."

To make comments on the Texas-Oklahoma haze rule refer to Docket No. EPA-R06-OAR-2014-0754. Comments are taken through April 20. Email comments to R6_TXOKRegionalHaze@epa.gov or mail Guy Donaldson, Chief, Air Planning Section (6PD-L), EPA, 1445 Ross Ave., Ste. 1200, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

To learn more, access <http://www.regulations.gov>.

— Rita Beving



GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

THE REST OF THE STORY



My name is Rachel Baker Ford. I live at 3317 Knights Haven Lane, Garland, Texas. 75044.

I am here, today in support of the new EPA haze regulations.

Have you ever held a child, gasping for a breath, in the middle of an asthma attack?

I have. I can tell you it is one of the most frightening experiences one can have. The only thing you can do for this child, is to remain absolutely calm and steady. I have held my child gasping for breath.

Two years ago, in February, we took a road trip from Dallas to a friend's ranch located about twenty miles Northwest of Denton, Texas with our grandchildren from NY. Right up I-35. The haze over Denton hung heavily that winter day. As we drove through Denton, Abby, 4, stuffed up and began coughing. Her nose ran the rest of the day. Older brother, Luke, 6, stuffed up through Denton, but cleared as we got away from the city line. On the return trip, Abby got worse and Luke's stuffiness returned as we traveled back through Denton. By the time we got to Lewisville, both children had cleared up — all the symptoms disappeared. It is a known fact that Denton has some of the worse air quality in Texas.

Please note: Today, as we traveled on the bus straight up I-35, when we went through Denton, Texas, my nose began to run, my head and chest became congested and I began to cough.

Children are at the greatest health risk from air pollution because they are more likely to be active outdoors and their lungs are still developing. Asthma strikes nearly 1 out of every 10 school children in the U.S. and is the number-one health issue that causes kids to miss school.

The EPA has estimated in 2015 that the Regional Haze plan protections will prevent 1,600 premature deaths, 2,200 non-fatal heart attacks and over one million lost school/work days due to pollution-related illnesses.

Texas sources produce more haze-causing pollution than Oklahoma and Arkansas combined. The top 14 polluters in Texas in 2009 were coal plants. Typical of annual emissions inventories over the last decade, in 2009, coal plants emitted 81 percent of SO₂, 52 percent of CO, 33 percent of PM10 and 22 percent of lead. Mercury emissions accounted for a large percent of Texas mercury pollution.

The dangers of coal are not confined to the coal-burning plants. Coal dust and diesel exhaust from coal trains and cargo ships can cause serious long-term health problems like lung and heart disease, and cancer. The wide ranging health dangers of coal dust include exposure to toxic heavy metals like mercury and increased rates of asthma, especially in children. Burlington Northern Sante Fe railroad (BNSF - a member of the American Legislative Council: ALEC) estimates up to 500 pounds of coal can be lost in the form of dust from EACH rail car en route.

The haze pollution in our wilderness areas is far more serious than providing a beautiful view of our National Parks and wildlife areas. This poisonous haze kills flora and fauna, alike. Without air which is breathable, people cannot exist in the wild areas or anywhere.

The EPA has proposed a strong plan to address and solve this devastating problem. My husband and I strongly support the new regulations. Our lives and yours depend upon it.

— Rachel Baker Ford

(These are the remarks delivered at the EPA hearing in Oklahoma City on January 15, 2015.)

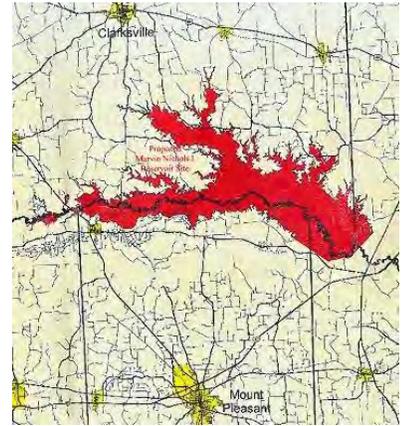
[editor: Related article on page 5]

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

ARTICLE

NO Marvin Nichols Reservoir!

TWDB votes on the Interregional Conflict between Region C and Region D



Press Release 01/08/15: Today, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) voted to resolve the Interregional Conflict between the 2011 Region C and Region D Regional Water Plans. Representatives from both Region C and Region D were given 10 minutes to address the Board prior to the vote. The Board then asked additional questions of both regions before voting on the conflict. In a 3-0 vote, the Board voted in favor of the Marvin Nichols Reservoir Project remaining in the Region C Regional Water Plan

Today's decision by the Board instructs Region C to retain Marvin Nichols reservoir as a recommended strategy in its 2011 Regional Water Plan. The quantitative analysis requested by the Board has been received and reviewed by the Executive Administrator, who finds that Region C has complied with the Board's interim order and current rules. The decision to build or not build the reservoir will ultimately be made by the project sponsor and various federal and state permitting agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. http://www.twdb.texas.gov/newsmedia/press_releases/2015/01/regionc_regiond.asp

Why Oppose the Reservoir?

Region C has one of the highest rates of water use per person in the state. Approximately 40 percent of the water used by Region C is used for lawn watering. <http://www.nomarvinnichols.com/index.html>



Residents whose land will be taken.



Charleen Granberry:
The family has owned and operated their property to be taken by the Nichols Reservoir for five (5) generations. Their primary product is hardwood timber. "We must plant a tree today which can be harvested in thirty (30) years." The rest of her statement revealed they couldn't sell the property because it is under the cloud of the reservoir planning.



Rachel Baker Ford

RBF: I stand in opposition to The Marvin Nichols Reservoir. I live in Region C, Garland, located in Dallas County. Dallas County has one of the highest rates of water use per person in the state. Recently one resident stated in *The Dallas Morning News* that he spent \$5,000 a month to water his lawn — *okay, because he can afford it.* I am opposed because it would consume more than 75,000 acres of prime Texas agriculture and hardwood timberland. ... destroy the economic base of the area ... for the loss of homesteads ... and so much more. Region C is full of water hogs. Conservation, except for a very small segment of the population is non-existent.

Further information : http://garlanddemocraticvoice.com/May_2014_3.jpg

The Garland Police Department In Information and Reality

— Staff

“Could a Ferguson type tragedy happen here?”

“Could a Ferguson type tragedy happen here?” was the subject of the Garland Area Democratic Club’s January meeting presented by Officer Joe Harn, Public Information Officer for the Garland Police Department.

“The mission of the Garland Police Department is to enhance the quality of life for our community by reducing crime and the fear of crime.”

<http://www.garlandpolice.com/gov/lq/safety/police/default.asp>

Joe Harn, Public Information Officer for the Garland Police said there was no way to be sure a black person never gets shot by a white officer. However, no Garland officer wants to shoot someone. They are very well trained, have more tools, such as pepper spray and tazers, than were used in the Ferguson, MO incident.

When a shooting occurs, it would be addressed differently than reported in Ferguson. The Garland Police Department wouldn’t tear gas the public. The department has good media relations, appropriate and factual information is shared in a timely manner. Officer Harn cautioned a lot of things can’t be said when such an incident happens in order to not damage a possible court case. But the Garland community has been prepared and trust has been built. Sometimes community leaders are given some information which is not released to the public.

Community policing programs started in 1990. The Citizens Police Academy is a 13 week program in which citizens learn first hand about operations through ride-alongs and other police activities. Citizens experience just how difficult the job is and has improved relations between police and the community.

Officer Harn pointed out police officers spend most of their time dealing with the 3 percent of the population that are trouble. The community programs help the officers deal with people because they get to know the good ninety-seven percent.

Minorities and women recruitment is being done but progress is slow. 82.1 percent of the Garland police force is white. 57.8 percent of Garland's population is white. Only 6 percent of the recruits are female.



<http://www.specialeventscenter.com/images/CCC-withflags2012.jpg>

“Since our opening in 2005, the Curtis Culwell Center brings together more than 700,000 people a year to enjoy events including graduations, concerts, performances, athletic competitions, tradeshow, corporate meetings, weddings, reunions, church services and other social and community gatherings.”

http://www.specialeventscenter.com/about_the_center/index.cfm

Tragedy Averted

On Saturday, January 17th, 500 protesters swarmed the Culwell Center in protest of a duly registered event sponsored by the Chicago-based Islamic organization called Sound Vision. The stated purpose of the event was education to quell the fears around Islam, “Islamophobia”

The protesters questioned the suitability of the event in the GISD-owned facility. One of the group suggested if they (the Muslims) wanted their way of life, they should go back to the Middle East and take Obama with them. Not only was this protest seen on local news stations, but was also seen on national news stations.

“The Garland Police Department reported no incidents or arrests and only had to intervene to cool tempers between protesters and event supporters on a couple occasions.”

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2015/01/17/500-protest-islamic-conference-at-garland-isd-facility/>

Instead of donning riot gear, drawing weapons and tazers, the Garland P.D. intervened with words and actions to cool tempers.

Wow. Great work, Garland Police Department! Your good work certainly has enhanced the quality of life for our community, reduced crime and especially the fear of crime.

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GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

REPRINT

“Do you agree or disagree with the Garland ISD’s actions to allow a Muslim peace conference at the Curtis Culwell Center?”

In *The Dallas Morning News Neighbors Garland–Mesquite* section on January 22, 2014, the staff requested public comments on the recent event at the GISD – owned Culwell Center. In an unscientific tally, the opinions of the responders were:

- 6 positive, in support of event and GISD
- 9 negative, opposed to the event and GISD
- 2 neutral of the event and GISD

Frequent contributors to the **GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE**, Elizabeth Walley, Mesquite, Peggy Henger, and Willa Kulhavy, of Garland, and Tony Torres, and Cynthia Stock, of Garland wrote in support of the GISD, the event, and the first amendment rights of all people.

The entire article, with all the letters, can be found at:

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/community-news/garland-mesquite/headlines/20150122-sounding-off-garland-mesquite-residents-debate-garland-isds-actions-to-allow-a-muslim-peace-conference.ece>

Elizabeth Walley, Mesquite: I’m going to assume that the Muslim in question is not a terrorist. I know how excited people can get, and charges of that nature flow all too freely in today’s environment. I think it’s fine for the Garland school district to allow the convention center to host the speaker. There is a large, peaceful Muslim community in this area, and I, for one, would like to know more about these neighbors of ours. Getting to know one another and engaging in dialogue is the very best remedy for the sort of fear and suspicion that stems from ignorance and leads to all sorts of bad things.

Peggy Henger, Garland: I am proud to see the Garland school board allow the convention center to be used for a conference that encourages tolerance of all religions. We encourage “teach tolerance.” This is an excellent example, and I hope teachers and parents will support the event.

Willa Kulhavy, Garland: I am glad the Garland school board’s convention center is being used for an event to combat Islamophobia and the board is not letting the religious prejudice of dangerously hateful people prevent Imam Siraj Wahhaj, the leader of the Muslim Alliance in North America and a popular Muslim speaker, from speaking in Garland at an event to combat Islamophobia. The fact people have objected to this event shows how much it is needed. May God, also known as Allah, bless this event and soften the hearts of the prejudiced.

Tony Torres, Garland: I totally agree with the school board’s action in promoting the concept of free speech and non-discrimination. If we are sincere about the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, we cannot pick and choose who has the freedom of speech. At a time when we are standing with France on the issue of freedom of speech after the senseless killing of satiric cartoonists, we should not undermine our position by not allowing a Muslim gathering. We always fear what we do not understand, and closing one’s mind does not promote any understanding. As Voltaire said, “I may not agree with what you have to say, but I’ll defend to the death your right to say it.” It does not get any more simple and true than that if you truly believe in the freedom of speech.

Cynthia Stock, Garland: Knowledge and understanding of any ideology can dispel fear. The benefit of living in a country with a constitution dedicated to protecting personal freedom is that if a person doesn’t want to attend something or listen to someone, they don’t have to. Conversely, if a person wants to learn and grow, the opportunities are there. I support the school board’s action. Opening the mind and expanding the world view can be a scary thing. Garland residents should applaud the decision.

[editor: A related article is found on page 8 of this issue.]

Texas Minimum Wage

Texas minimum wage of \$7.25/hour is the same as the federal minimum wage. Texas' failure to increase its minimum wage depresses the vibrancy of its economy because so many of its workers are not receiving a fair living wage. The result is less money being placed into the market by purchases which would otherwise flow to the benefit of businesses which support Texas' economy. Paying a fair living wage is good for the employer, the employee and the businesses which serve both the market and the supply chain. Support increasing the minimum wage in Texas. Dallas County's effort to require all persons wanting to enter into a contract with Dallas County to pay a minimum wage of \$10.10 hour is a modest, but important start. Dallas County's efforts are being challenged — communicate with the Dallas County Commissioners, the Texas representatives and senators in Austin, and incoming governor, Greg Abbott, to push for adoption of a statewide minimum wage of at least \$10.10 hour and alternatively to make clear that any Texas County may adopt a rule or ordinance requiring its contractors to pay employees no less than \$10.10 hour.

— Katherine Savers McGovern
Posted on Facebook 12/28/14

Additional Comments from Facebook

Sharon Valenti: I recently uncovered an old pay stub from 2001 when my son was 16 working at Tom Thumb. He earned \$6 an hour. That's how far we have NOT come in paying a fair wage.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz: Twenty states are raising their minimum wage on January 1st. I'm so happy for all of the workers and families who will have a little less worry in their lives. This is truly something to celebrate! *Facebook 12/28/14*

Educated guess on tax cuts

Letters to the Editor Published: Jan. 13, 2015 6:05 p.m

Re: "Budget forecast upbeat — Comptroller says legislators have \$18B in new money," Tuesday news story.

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar says legislators have \$18 billion in new money, reported *The Dallas Morning News*.

Hot diggity! The second paragraph of the story indicated that the Legislature could consider boosting schools and other state programs, and wouldn't have to use accounting tricks to balance the budget unless it changes taxes, fees or other revenue sources. Within an hour of reading the newspaper, I heard KERA-FM (90.1) mention tax cuts were going to be addressed in the 2015 Texas Legislature. No mention of school funding, roads or other state programs.

Remember Comptroller Susan Combs' prediction of a \$6 billion budget deficit justified our Texas Legislature's cuts to school funding. The next legislative session the comptroller revealed a \$5.5 billion surplus. The correction didn't cause the school funds to be completely restored. Why not?

Before our legislators pass tax cuts, think. What's going to happen to Texas if Comptroller Hegar discovers next year that Texas really had a big 2015 deficit? Is that why donors need to be paid with tax cuts first?

— Willa Kulhavy, Garland

Undoing Citizens United damage

Re: "A sorry anniversary — Citizens United ruling left impression justice is for sale, two judges write," Wednesday Viewpoints.

This column seems to make a lot of sense. The ideal solution would be to limit donations to a small amount. Since that is not possible now, and looks risky for the future unless the Citizens United decision can be overturned, judicial elections by merit would seem a logical idea.

But making sure the merit system works and is not partisan in itself would be a challenge. If a merit system were to be implemented, it should not include a system whereby judges would be recalled. That would almost certainly invite partisan politics back to the table.

Peggy Henger, Garland

The Dallas Morning News
Letters to the Editor
Published 01/25/15

GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

BULLETIN BOARD

Announcement

Effective January 9, 2015 the **GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE** — News and Information for North Texas is published by the Garland Democratic Voice, LLC.

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All copy is subject to editorial review.

Rates subject to change without notice.

From the editor:

The **GARLAND DEMOCRATIC VOICE** has embarked upon a new path for me, my family and for you, our readers. Our coverage has been chafing at the bit for many months and was rapidly expanding beyond the boundaries of Garland. We have not abandoned Garland, for what happens in the rest of the world, happens in Garland. What happens in Garland is part of what happens in Texas and the U.S. . New coverage will be events primarily in North Texas and Texas as a whole.

Many of our writers are with us on this new endeavor. A number of folks from outside of Garland have already joined us. Won't you join us? Let us know what is going on in your part of the world!

Rachel Baker Ford, editor