



House Republicans seek to impose bigger fines, remove seniority and add fundraising restrictions in new a House bill. Photos by Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman

# Stakes to grow for breaking quorum

‘Brutal’ proposed sanctions target lawmakers fleeing to stall legislation

By John C. Moritz  
STAFF WRITER

The Texas House is poised to advance legislation aimed at discouraging future quorum breaks, but the measure would not affect the more than 50 Democrats who either left the state or went into hiding this month to stall the Republican-backed legislation to redraw the state’s congressional map.

House Bill 18 is expected to come up for a floor debate Tuesday and is likely to stoke the partisan divide that has been a hallmark of the two special sessions this summer that have been dominated by the redistricting effort to give Texas Republicans five additional winnable seats in Congress.

Also in the pipeline is a proposed change in the House rules that could not only make quorum-breaking more expensive but also cost members at least some of their seniority, which is major factor for such perks

**Sanctions continues on A3**



Alec DeGilio, doorkeeper for the Texas House of Representatives, waits for lawmakers to arrive in the House Chamber at the Capitol in Austin in early August. Democratic state representatives are facing stiff penalties for breaking quorum recently in an attempt to block a vote on a plan for congressional redistricting. A new bill would go beyond monetary fines.

*“They were able to to force Democrats in other parts of the country to wake up and start pushing for their own redistricting as a response to what’s happening in Texas. I think there’s your victory. But at least within the state, they were never going to win this thing. The bloom might be off of the quorum-busting rose.”*

Jon Taylor, a political science professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio

## Musk pushing tunnel proposal

\$760M plan targets flooding in Houston

By Lauren McGaughy  
TEXAS NEWSROOM  
and Yilun Cheng  
STAFF WRITER

The devastating flooding in Houston caused by Hurricane Harvey in 2017 killed dozens of people, inundated hundreds of thousands of homes and left the community desperate for a solution.

Since then, local flood experts have extensively studied the possibility of a multibillion-dollar tunnel system across Harris County. Studies have focused on the construction of pipelines, 30 to 40 feet in diameter, that could ferry massive amounts of water out to the Gulf in the event of a storm.

Now, after years of research and discussion, Elon Musk wants a piece of the project.

An investigation by the Texas Newsroom and the Houston Chronicle has found that the billionaire, in partnership with Houston-area U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt, has spent months aggressively pushing state and local officials to hire Musk’s Boring Co. to build two narrower, 12-foot

**Tunnels continues on A4**

## Data: 1.2M migrants out of U.S. workforce

By Corey Williams  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

It’s tomato season, and Lidia is harvesting on farms in California’s Central Valley.

She is also anxious. Attention from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement could upend her life more than 23 years after she illegally crossed the U.S.-Mexico border as a teenager.

“The worry is they’ll pull you over when you’re driving and ask for your papers,” said Lidia, who spoke on the condition that only her first name be used because of her fears of deportation. “We need to work. We need to feed our families and pay our rent.”

As parades and other events celebrating the contributions of workers in the United States were held Monday for the Labor Day holiday, experts say

**Migrants continues on A3**

# Camps oppose licensing ban tied to cabins in flood plain

By Megan Kimble  
STAFF WRITER

Leaders of three Kerr County youth camps have written to Texas House lawmakers to oppose legislation that would prohibit the state from licensing camps with cabins in the 100-year flood plain.

Directors at Camp Waldemar, Camp Stewart and Vista Camps on Friday wrote that the proposed legislation, which passed the House but awaits approval by the Senate, would cost the camps millions of dollars for rebuilding and likely force them to close.

The three camps didn’t report any deaths due to the July 4 flood, but they all have structures in the

100-year flood plain. A Texas Tribune analysis found that two-thirds of the structures at Camp Stewart and a third at Camp Waldemar are in the flood plain.

Camp Mystic, where 27 girls and counselors died in the flood, has several buildings, including its dining hall and recreation hall, in a floodway, an area deemed “extremely hazardous” by local officials, Hearst Newspapers found.

State Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, introduced the flood plain prohibition amendment to House Bill 1, which requires overnight youth camps to create detailed plans for natural disasters and other emergencies. The bill also establishes civil penalties for noncompliance.

Howard noted that 13 summer camps along the Guadalupe River have structures built on flood-prone land.

“These camps were allowed to operate under old statutes and agreements that have been in place for many decades,” she said. “We cannot continue to allow unsafe building practices to continue.”

Camp leaders cite a 2023 study that found that youth camps across the state contribute \$4 billion to the state’s economy annually, noting the many jobs and businesses that would be affected in Kerr County.

“We are committed to working with lawmakers to strengthen standards that protect children,” they wrote.



Satellite imagery shows Camp Mystic in Hunt a few days after the July 4 flood, which killed 27 girls and counselors at the camp. Nearmap

