

More union members seeking office

Candidates challenging Democrats they see as out of touch with working-class Texans

By Benjamin Wermund
STAFF WRITER

Newly elected state Sen. Taylor Rehmet flipped a heavily Republican Fort Worth district with a campaign that stressed his working-class roots.

The Democrat's yard signs described him as a machinist,

veteran and Texan — in that order. His campaign stressed that the signs were union-printed.

Rehmet is part of a wave of labor leaders and union members running for public office this year, challenging state Democrats they say have lost touch with working Texans.

"They have done so poorly by

our standards that we have members sitting on the couch literally going hungry," said Marcos Vélez, a steelworkers union leader running for lieutenant governor. "We're fighting for our lives. We have lost so much when it comes to working people in this country. We really feel like if we don't do something drastic, there won't be anything left."

Vélez, who is up against state Rep. Vikki Goodwin of Austin

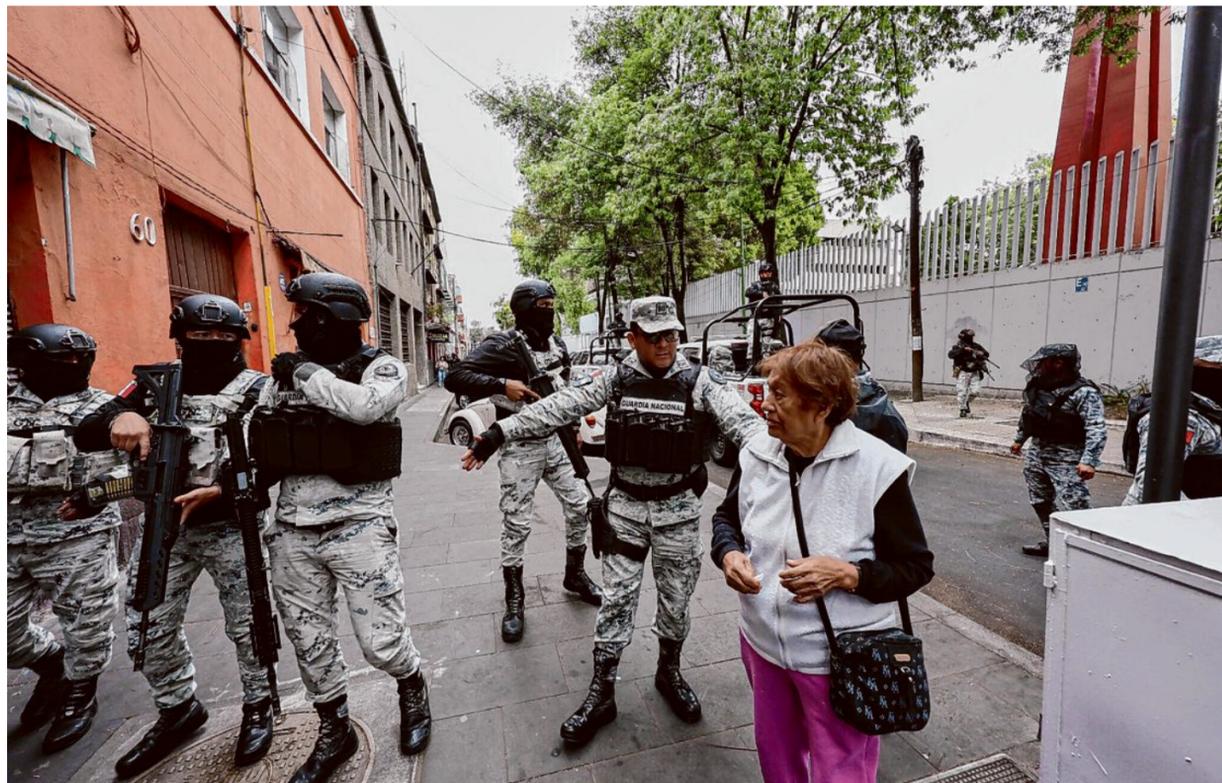
in the March 3 Democratic primary, is one of at least 16 union members running campaigns this cycle, according to the Texas AFL-CIO, the state's largest labor group.

The AFL-CIO says it is the largest slate of labor candidates in recent memory and comes as union membership in Texas has reached its highest level in 25 years. New figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that Texas now has the fourth-

most union members in the United States: 673,000, behind California, New York and Illinois. The growth came as polling shows unions have record-high favorability nationally as workers seek greater control in a time of economic instability.

The candidates argue that Democrats could gain ground in the GOP-dominated state by keeping a laser focus on pocket-book issues, such as cost of liv-

Labor continues on A2



Ginette Riquelme/Associated Press

The Mexican national guard patrols around government offices in Mexico City on Sunday after the death of the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. On Monday, schools in Mexico were closed and many residents stayed home.

3 Dems pressing agency on tariff refunds

Effort to return \$175B follows ruling by Supreme Court

By Josh Boak
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A trio of Senate Democrats is calling for the federal government to start refunding roughly \$175 billion in tariff revenues that the Supreme Court ruled were collected because of an illegal set of orders by President Donald Trump.

Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon, Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire were to unveil a bill on Monday that would require U.S. Customs and Border Protection to issue refunds over the course of 180 days and pay interest on the refunded amount.

The measure would prioritize refunds to small businesses, and it encourages importers, wholesalers and large companies to pass the refunds on to their customers.

"Trump's illegal tax scheme has already done lasting damage to American families, small businesses and manufacturers who have been hammered by wave after wave of new Trump tariffs," Wyden said, stressing that the "crucial first step" to fixing the problem begins with "putting money back in the

Tariffs continues on A5

A nation on the edge

Mexican military continues battling cartel after killing drug lord

By Megan Janetsky and María Verza
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAPALPA, Mexico — A day after the Mexican army killed the country's most powerful drug lord, the picturesque town where it happened was a study in contrasts.

Tourist shops in Tapalpa were open Monday, and work-

INSIDE

Texans in Mexico sheltering in place. **B1**

ers were on the job. But gunshots also rang out, and in the street was a dead man lying beside a bullet-pocked vehicle.

Meanwhile, heavily armed Mexican security forces kept up their battle with cartel gun-

men following the killing that sparked a surge in violence and put the country on edge. Cartel fighters continued to block roads as smoke rose on the outskirts of the town in the state of Jalisco.

More than 70 people died in the attempt to capture Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes and the aftermath, authorities said Monday. Known as "El

Mencho," he was the notorious leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of the most powerful criminal organizations in Mexico.

The body count taken by security officials included security forces, suspected cartel members and others. Officials did not offer details, and the circumstances of most of the

Mexico continues on A7

Rep. Gonzales' pursuit of staffer is revealed in sexual text messages

By Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson
STAFF WRITER

In the spring of 2024, U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales was in the midst of a bruising primary campaign, fighting to hang on to his congressional seat. But politics was not on his mind when he began trading text messages with a staff member at 12:15 a.m. on May 9.

"Send me a sexy pic," he text-

"He took advantage of a very vulnerable woman."

Adrian Aviles, widower of Regina Ann Santos-Aviles

ed Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, then director of his regional district office in Uvalde, according to messages obtained by Hearst

Gonzales continues on A4

Records show aide who killed herself frantically called 911, talked of spouse

By Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson
STAFF WRITER

Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, the congressional staffer who died in September after setting herself on fire in her backyard, told first responders she did it because she had discovered her estranged husband was romantically involved with her best friend, newly disclosed records show.

Santos-Aviles, 35, former director of U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales' regional office in Uvalde,

had an affair with the married congressman in 2024, text messages and interviews show.

News reports on the liaison have become fodder for partisan attacks in the sharply contested March 3 Republican primary in Texas' 23rd Congressional District. Gonzales, 45, is running for a fourth term.

Responding to an opponent's demand that he resign over the affair, Gonzales last week called on authorities to release police records on Santos-Aviles' suicide, apparently be-

Records continues on A3



Courtesy of Nora Gonzales

Regina Ann Santos-Aviles was 35 when she set herself on fire at home in Uvalde and died in September.

\$1 BILLION
GIVEN TO CLIENTS IN THE LAST 4 YEARS

AUSTIN CORPUS CHRISTI DALLAS HOUSTON SAN ANTONIO

TJH
THOMAS HENRY

