

Candidates told to unite after runoff

Patrick says U.S. Senate seat could be lost if Cornyn and Paxton fail to support winner

By Philip Jankowski
STAFF WRITER

AUSTIN — Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Wednesday that Sen. John Cornyn and Attorney

General Ken Paxton must unite behind the winner of their runoff or risk handing the prize to Democrat James Talarico. "I'm making this challenge today," Patrick said. "John

Cornyn, if you lose, you need to endorse Ken Paxton and get your voters to support Ken Paxton. And Ken Paxton, if you lose, you need to endorse John Cornyn and get your voters to support John Cornyn." His blunt warning: "Get over it, and come together as one." If Republicans stay home in

November, Patrick said, Talarico will win the general election for Senate. His remarks came during a keynote speech at the Texas Public Policy Foundation Summit, a gathering of conservative leaders organized by the influential think tank. It underscores the stakes of

the May 26 runoff that has grown increasingly personal and divisive, with Cornyn and Paxton trading attacks that risk splintering Republican voters. Patrick's message reflects a broader concern among GOP leaders that even a small drop
Runoff continues on A3



Emilio Morenatti/Associated Press

Displaced families who fled Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon seek donated food on Thursday in Beirut.

Israeli leader allows talks with Lebanon

Negotiations aimed at disarming militants, establishing relations

By Jon Gambrell, Elena Becatoros and Mike Corder
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — In a potential boost to Middle East ceasefire efforts, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that he au-

thorized direct negotiations with Lebanon "as soon as possible" aimed at disarming Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants and establishing relations between the neighbors. The two countries have technically been at war since Israel was established in 1948, and Netanyahu later stressed that there was

no ceasefire between them. In a video statement, the Israeli leader said his nation will keep striking Hezbollah until security is restored in northern Israel. There was no immediate response from Lebanese authorities. But Israel-Lebanon negotiations were expected to begin next
Mideast continues on A4

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Lebanon reels after war's deadliest day. **A5**
Protests in Austin call for end to war. **B1**

House members to face off over fines

Republicans want quorum-busting Democrats to pay up

By John C. Moritz
STAFF WRITER

A group of Texas House members will meet on Friday as Republicans try to figure out how far they will go to collect fines levied on the dozens of Democrats who broke quorum last summer to fight redistricting. The GOP-led House administration committee will convene behind closed doors to consider the financial penalties, according to a meeting notice. State Rep. Charlie Geren, R-Fort Worth, who chairs the panel, did not return a call for comment on Wednesday. In January, Geren notified more than 50 of the 62 Democrats that each owes \$9,200 in fines and other charges for impeding the progress of the House by not showing up in the Capitol last August as lawmakers deliberated a plan to overhaul the state's congressional map. The charges include a \$7,000 fee for being absent, plus another \$2,000 to cover the \$125,000 the state spent trying to round them up and bring them back to Austin. The fines cannot be paid with campaign cash, meaning members must personally foot the bill. So far, they haven't. In lieu of a formal appeal, the Democrats who broke quorum have sent letters to the administration committee protesting the methods used to calculate
Fines continues on A2

Data center opponents put Paxton in a bind ahead of Senate runoff

By James Osborne
WASHINGTON BUREAU

Last month, county commissioners in Fayette County, a deeply Republican area between Houston and Austin, approved a resolution opposing the development of data centers after word spread that tech companies were targeting the area. The push from cities and counties across Texas to slow the flood of data center development comes as Republican leaders are heralding their arrival as another

economic boom, putting pressure on Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to weigh in ahead of his runoff next month with U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. As the state's top lawyer, Paxton has been asked to weigh in on whether municipalities have the power to hold up data projects, pitting the Republican between top tech companies and their GOP supporters, including Gov. Greg Abbott and President Donald Trump, and the rural Texans who have long supported him. In conservative Hood County

in North Texas, close to Paxton's home base, a flood of applications for the construction of data centers has drawn opposition among residents who worry the facilities, which require large volumes of water and electricity and often stretch across thousands of acres, will deplete the region's water supplies and drive up power prices. "The concern most people have is this new type of development is going faster than the speed of information coming to
Paxton continues on A2



Smiley N. Pool/Dallas Morning News
Texas Attorney General and U.S. Senate candidate Ken Paxton has been slow to rule on matters linked to data centers in the state.

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