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ELECTIONS '26

Runoff campaigns chasing voters

Candidates scrambling to get out messages for May 26 contest

By Aarón Torres
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AUSTIN — Before sunrise, Georgiana Bustos is already mapping out the doors to knock, phones to ring and voters likely to show up for Democratic lieutenant governor candidate Vikki Goodwin.

For Plácido Gómez, the days stretch across Texas highways and late-night campaign stops, chasing every possible audience for his candidate in that same race, Marcos Vélez.

The two operatives are running different campaigns in advance of the May 26 runoff. But both are grinding through the same political reality: In low-turnout runoffs, races can hinge on finding and motivating a relatively small group of voters to cast ballots again. Early voting for the May 26 runoff begins Monday and runs through Friday for the unsettled races from the March primary. While that drew more than 4.5 million voters across both parties, candidates are now firing up their messages again in the final stretch.

"It's always about the numbers," said Bustos, who is Goodwin's Dallas field director. "The more people you can reach out to, the better off you are."

Gómez, the Vélez campaign manager, said he's trying to get the candidate in front of as many voters as possible at events across the state. "We field

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ECONOMY

Supporters pack child care tax hearing

Commissioners urged to advance proposed tax at meeting

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The Dallas County Commissioners Court hosted a full house of parents, pastors, non-profit leaders and business representatives last week, many wearing red stickers that read "childcare supports working families."

The crowd came to urge commissioners to advance a proposed childcare tax they argued is essential to keeping parents in the workforce and stabilizing an increasingly strained early education system.

It's not yet clear whether a

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Costs squeezing homeowners

North Texans pay double the national average on their monthly home insurance

By Alison Saldanha
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Any gains North Texans receive from protesting their property taxes may be lost to growing home insurance costs that are stretching homeowners' budgets and blunting the region's affordability edge, real estate experts say.

Among the largest U.S. metros, Dallas-Fort Worth now has the second highest number of homeowners with annual insurance premiums exceeding \$4,000, according to a *News* analysis of the latest census data. The region has superseded cities such as New York, Houston or Los Angeles, cities more



prone to flooding and wildfire risks. It is second only to Miami.

Mortgage lenders require homebuyers to secure insurance policies before they complete a home loan.

In April, home insurance costs made up about 15% of a homeowner's mortgage payment in North Texas — double the national average — according to data from Realtor.com.

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Angela Piazza/Staff Photographer

Soaring homeowner insurance costs are one of the top three concerns for Texas voters in the upcoming election, second only to healthcare.

TRANSPORTATION



Juan Figueroa/Staff Photographer

Araceli Campos (left) chatted with Gloria Gonzalez as they travel on the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) route 30 bus to the Lake June Station at the start of her two-hour long commute to Highland Park on Friday. Highland Park residents voted to leave DART in May.

The women of Route 237

They had the same routes for years, even decades, to get to jobs in Highland Park; this week the commutes changed

By Lilly Kersh
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Araceli Campos says bye to a friend and hops off the bus on Route 237, colorful purse in hand and blue sneakers on her feet. She starts her walk through the tree-lined streets of Highland Park, past historic estates and designer stores. It's been nearly two hours since she first boarded the bus at 7 a.m. in Pleasant Grove.

This has been her settled routine for the past six years. But on Thursday, the bus didn't stop, her bus stop the casualty of a vote by Highland Park residents to end the town's relationship with Dallas Area Rapid Transit. Overnight, the walk on the last stretch of her commute to work at a house in the town nearly tripled.

It takes a toll on her 59-year-old legs. And she's dreading July.

"The people who work there are al-

ready older, 50 and up," Campos said. "We're tired — we get home and we're exhausted. ... Now that they added more distance, there's more fatigue."

Between Bentleys, Porsches and G-Wagons zipping by, a big yellow and blue DART bus rumbles down Preston Road. Route 237 is the only bus line in Highland Park, but it no longer pulls over at the 15 stops within the town's boundaries.

During the morning rush, the bus is half full, mainly with women like Campos — housekeepers, nannies and restaurant employees who traverse multiple buses, trains, cars and sidewalks for hours each morning to get to work, and who have done so for years or even decades.

The Dallas area is reckoning with the value of public transportation and how it is provided after several cities called elections to leave DART, with leaders saying it costs too much for too little. While the elections resulted in on-

ly one city jumping ship, it's the women on Route 237 who are paying the price.

Their routes to work, already lengthy and complex, just got a little more difficult, and alternatives are unfamiliar to years of routine.

In place of the banished bus stops, Highland Park launched a local van service at a fraction of the cost for the town.

A fleet of four on-demand vans can be reached by phone or through an app to shuttle people around town and up to a mile outside its borders. The rides are free for the next six months, then the Town Council will reevaluate.

Most women on Route 237 said they haven't heard of Highland Park On-Demand, don't know how to access it or worry it won't get them to work on time, although some were interested in the service. Some signs advertising the on-demand app at closed bus stops were in English, while many of the women commuting speak only Spanish.

Highland Park Mayor Will Beecher said DART did not make financial sense for the town, which has a population of around 8,700 and is 2.3 square miles, located around three miles north of the center of Dallas.

It's one of the wealthiest towns in Texas, with a median household income greater than \$250,000. Residents may not need to take the bus, but their housekeepers and restaurant workers do, Campos said.

"We workers are the ones who always use the bus," she said. "We are few ... [but] we serve them."

The town pays around \$9 million annually to DART through a one-cent sales tax for a route that sees about 35 boardings each weekday. The agency does not report the average number of riders who disembark at each bus stop in the town.

While service ended Thursday, the

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Windy; ch. iso. storms



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NATION & WORLD

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