



20 high school swimmers to watch in district meets

SPORTS, 1B

El Paso Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2026 | ELPASOTIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

LAS CRUCES



The Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally will take flight Jan. 17-19 in the Downtown Plaza de Las Cruces. MARIA CORTES GONZALEZ/EL PASO TIMES

Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally returns to city

Natassia Paloma El Paso Times | USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

The Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally is returning to Las Cruces with an iconic figure joining the balloon lineup.

Hot air balloons take flight from Jan. 16-18, and you can enjoy the magical, family-friendly event for free. In 2025, the balloon rally returned after a 14-year hiatus. The Las Cruces event began in 1977 with 13 balloons, and its name has changed over the last few decades.

In 1985, the rally was known as the Whole Enchilada Balloon Rally, and in 1988 it was renamed the Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally. At that time, several notable balloons graced the sky, including the Wells Fargo Stagecoach and Smokey the Bear.

This year, you'll find a special guest floating among the rest.

New Mexico's beloved Zozobra will make an appearance,

the Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally posted on its Facebook page. The mission of the rally is to "work together as a community to engage, encourage and educate in our schools, our neighborhoods and surrounding areas about the sport of hot air ballooning."

Here's what to know about this year's Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally.

Schedule of events

- Friday, Jan. 16: The Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally begins with its "Kick Off Glow" from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Downtown Plaza, 100 North Main St. in Las Cruces.

See **BALLOON RALLY**, Page 2A

EL PASO WATER

Residents object as board votes for 12.2% rate hike

Adam Powell

El Paso Times
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

Water and wastewater fees are set to rise.

The Public Service Board of El Paso voted 5-2 Wednesday, Jan. 14, to approve a proposed 12.2% rate increase from El Paso Water.

Board Chairman Bryan Morris was joined by board members Anna Gitter, Charlie Intebi, Hector Ocaranza and Lane Gaddy in approving the rate hike. Mayor Renard Johnson and board member Stefanie Block Urbarri voted against.

"With many of the residents facing financial strain right now, I cannot support a double-digit rate increase," Johnson said after voting against the rate hike. "There's health care costs that are rising, there's grocery costs that are rising, we're facing a gas increase, we're facing an electric

See **RATE HIKE**, Page 2A



Community members listen to public comments before the El Paso Public Service Board votes on a proposed water rate increase on Jan. 14 in El Paso. OMAR ORNELAS/EL PASO TIMES

2026 GUBERNATORIAL RACE

Borderland law enforcement endorses Abbott reelection

Kristian Jaime

El Paso Times
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

Flanked by officers, Gov. Greg Abbott's 2026 campaign was bolstered as Borderland law enforcement agencies announced their endorsement for his reelection efforts.

The campaign stop on Wednesday, Jan. 14, at the El Paso Municipal Police Officers' Association Memorial Hall was



Abbott

The visit was also a chance for Abbott to double down on the controversial immigration enforcement operations in Texas in lockstep with the Trump Ad-

ministration. a chance to garner El Paso Municipal Police Officers' Association, National Border Patrol Council, Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition and other Texas county sheriffs' endorsement.

ministration.

"I thank them and their organizations for what they do every day and those who dedicate their lives to law enforcement," Abbott said. "There is an urgent and ongoing need for public safety in our state and I want officers to know they have a governor who has their backs. I've repeatedly focused on doing everything to ensure safe communities across our state."

In what he characterized as a "reaf-

firmation" to the people of Texas via their endorsement, Abbott noted supporting officers meant giving them the tools and resources to enforce state and federal laws.

Citing his record as tough on crime, especially along the border through Operation LoneStar, he underscored the need to continue the crackdown on immigrants in the U.S. without legal status

See **ABBOTT**, Page 2A

Treatment of hearing loss with hearing aids may delay cognitive decline.*

Recent studies have found that treating hearing loss can support healthy aging and reduce the risk of cognitive decline by 48% over three years.¹

AudioNova
Your Hearing Experts

Protect your brain with just one visit.
BOOK NOW 915-226-0324

Formerly Connect Hearing
6348 Edgemere Blvd, El Paso

FREE HEARING TEST

RISK-FREE IN-HOME TRIAL
of the latest hearing aid technology²
Offer expires 01/30/26

Hear better for years to come with our **SAME-DAY SERVICE**

*Source: Sarant et al. 2023 <https://healthsciences.unimelb.edu.au/research-groups/audiology-and-speech-pathology-research/hearing-and-cognition-research-program/research/remediation-hearing-aids>; Lin, F. et al. (2023, July 17). Hearing intervention versus health education control to reduce cognitive decline in older adults with hearing loss in the USA (ACHEVE): a multicentre, randomised controlled trial. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01406-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01406-X). ²Certain types of hearing loss may require a hearing instrument model that is not appropriate for the trial. Hearing evaluation required. See clinic for details. Only available for selected hearing instruments. Offers expire 01/30/26.

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to elpasotimes.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 146 | Issue 15
Subscribe 877-301-0021
©2026 \$3.49

