

A curveball for camping culture



Sam Owens/San Antonio Express-News

Scott Peryer escaped with his dogs when floodwaters swamped his RV at Buckhorn Lake Resort in July.

During Hill Country floods, people in RVs and cabins were especially vulnerable; now many are trying to figure out how to move forward

By Madison Iszler
STAFF WRITER

KERR COUNTY — The floodwaters that swept through the Hill Country in July 2025 missed the recreational vehicle Scott Peryer lives in year-round by about 100 yards.

This year, Peryer wasn't as lucky.

He woke up at 3 a.m. on July 16 to someone knocking on his door, telling him to flee as rain came down in torrents. He grabbed his keys, wallet and cell phone and swam with his two dogs to higher ground as the creek bordering the Buckhorn Lake Resort in Kerrville rose.

The water ruined his RV's electrical system, rendering it a loss, and destroyed Peryer's Jeep and most of his belongings. The 56-year-old U.S. Army veteran said the RV was not insured and he has minimal savings to fall back on. He primarily



Andrew J. Whitaker/San Antonio Express-News

Lorena Guillen, 55, said she does not plan to reopen Blue Oak RV Park. She and her husband say they want to expand other ventures on the property instead.

lives off disability and Social Security payments, he said, and he is staying in a hotel temporarily while he searches for a new home.

"How could this happen again?" Peryer said.

The back-to-back floods had an outsized impact on Hill Country RV parks and campgrounds, which have proven to be

particularly vulnerable in one of the most flood-prone regions in the United States. At least 44 of the 119 people who died in Kerr County last year were staying in RVs or rental cabins and 39 of them were swept away from HTR TX Hill Country and Blue Oak RV Park, two adjacent properties.

The flooding has raised questions about whether cities and counties should further limit where RVs and cabins can be located, and about how to balance those restrictions with what people love about being near rivers, a hallmark of the Hill Country.

"Central Texas is known for its beauty and its beautiful rivers, and that's the place you go to enjoy nature. It's also known as Flash Flood Alley," said Michelle Annette Meyer, director of the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University. "You have this beautiful place that the majority of the time is safe to be near, but then it can turn deadly really quickly with different rainstorms, so it makes it a challenge."

It's common practice for RV parks and campgrounds to be in flood zones because the land is scenic and less expensive

Flooding continues on A6

City's violent crime still on decline

Survey: Houston's rate falls to pre-pandemic levels for the first time

By Matt deGrood
STAFF WRITER

The rate of violent crime in Houston and the rest of the nation declined in the first half of the year, a recent survey showed, continuing a yearslong drop following a surge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The positive numbers have become a national talking point, with public safety experts divided on what might be driving the tallies to historic lows and elected officials across the nation, led by President Donald Trump, quick to take credit for them.

Homicides, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults all declined in Houston and nationally in the first half of 2026, according to data from the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which surveyed 67 U.S. law enforcement agencies. It is the first time all four crimes fell below their levels

Crime continues on A6

Pediatric care may face 'hard decisions'

Children's hospitals in state ring alarm on Medicaid pay rule

By Evan MacDonald
STAFF WRITER

Children's hospitals have spent the past year bracing for the fallout from roughly \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts included in a sweeping spending bill that President Donald Trump signed into law last year.

Now the federal government has proposed additional restrictions on Medicaid funding, and children's hospitals worry the financial harm to pediatric healthcare could be even worse than expected.

Children's hospitals in Texas and nationwide are asking the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to scale back a proposed rule that would dictate how states will implement cuts to a key source of Medicaid funding, known as state-direct

Medicaid continues on A3

Texas appeals court slashes Jones' damages by over \$43M

By Claire Goodman
STAFF WRITER

A Texas appeals court on Friday wiped more than \$43 million from the damages Infowars founder Alex Jones was ordered to pay the parents of a 6-year-old boy killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting.

The Third Court of Appeals reduced the exemplary, or punitive, damages awarded to Neil Heslin and Scarlett Lewis from more than \$45 million to \$1.5 million, accord-



Infowars founder Alex Jones filed for bankruptcy protection in 2022.

ing to court documents. The ruling leaves intact about \$4.1 million in compensatory damages, bringing the new total to about \$5.6 million.

Heslin and Lewis' son, Jesse, was among the 20 students and six staff members slain at Sandy Hook Elementary School

in Connecticut in December 2012. Gunman Adam Lanza was killed by police. Jones later spread conspiracy theories about the massacre through his online Infowars channel.

Heslin sued Jones for defamation and both parents sued for intentional infliction of emotional distress. An Austin jury in 2022 awarded Heslin \$110,000 in compensatory damages for defamation and awarded each parent \$2 million for emotional distress. Jurors separate-

Jones continues on A6

Senate hopefuls offer plans to fight Texans' rising costs

By Casey Murray
AUSTIN BUREAU

With affordability concerns dominating this year's election cycle, both candidates in the U.S. Senate race in Texas are pitching plans to address the rising cost of living.

Attorney General Ken Paxton's plan focuses on tax deductions that tax experts say will disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Americans, and he hasn't outlined a way to pay for it. State Rep. James Talarico's focuses on pro-



Attorney General Ken Paxton and state Rep. James Talarico are running for U.S. Senate.



grams that will benefit middle- and low-income people through tax crack-downs on corporations and wealthy Americans that experts warn could stifle the economy.

Both are pitching themselves to voters as candidates who will help regular people.

Paxton said his plan would "put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of hardworking Texans." Talarico said that "I'll fight to unrig this economy. I'll fight to raise your pay. I'll fight to lower your costs."

Of course, the effect of tax legislation is difficult to anticipate in the abstract. And any reform comes down to more than one

Election continues on A3