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Council resolution supports RRAD



A tactical vehicle rolls through a ceremonial ribbon during the unveiling of upgraded workspace Jan. 30 at Red River Army Depot in Hooks, Texas. (Staff photo by Stevon Gamble)

KARL RICHTER
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — The City Council recently passed a resolution urging Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense to protect and support the Red River Army Depot, calling it a cornerstone of both national defense and the regional economy.

The resolution urges congressional delegations from Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma to advocate for policies that protect RRAD's mission and workforce. It also encourages the Department of Defense to recog-

nize RRAD's unique, cost-effective operational model as a model of military efficiency and fiscal responsibility.

The move comes in response to federal discussions on potential significant workload reductions that could threaten the depot's continued operations, according to a City Hall news release.

"Red River Army Depot, located in Bowie County, serves a vital role in maintaining, repairing, and overhauling tactical military vehicles and equipment for the U.S. Army, other branches of the military, and foreign military

partners. Unlike many federal installations, RRAD is financially self-sustaining, operating without annual appropriations from congress, generating revenue through its services," the release stated.

Mayor Bob Bruggeman emphasized that preserving RRAD means protecting both national security and thousands of local livelihoods.

"The Red River Army Depot is not only crucial to our national security, but it also drives our regional economy," he said. "We stand united in our support of RRAD and call on Congress to recognize its value and protect it from any

future cuts or closures."

RRAD generates an estimated \$1.6 billion in annual economic impact across Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, the release stated, citing the Texas Comptroller's Office.

"In a show of growing regional solidarity," Wake Village, Nash, New Boston and Bowie County are currently considering similar resolutions, according to the release.

For more information, contact city Communications Manager Brooke Stone at 903-798-3901 or brooke.stone@texarkanatexas.gov.

TISD's mobile lab brings STEM to students

SHARDA JAMES
TEXARKANA GAZETTE

TEXARKANA, Texas — The Texarkana Independent School District is taking science and innovation on the road with the launch of its mobile education lab.

The district unveiled the lab with a ribbon-cutting Wednesday at Waggoner Creek Elementary School. The orange and black trailer features high-tech tools and science, technology, engineering and math stations.

"The launch of our Mobile STEM Lab is a major step forward in our mission to provide innovative, engaging and hands-on learning experiences for all students," Superintendent Dr. Doug Brubaker said. "By bringing STEM directly to our elementary campuses, we're inspiring curiosity and building the critical thinking skills that will lay the foundation for future success.

The unit is part of TISD's ongoing effort to expose students to science and technology in engaging ways, according to Mindy Gennings, director of college and career readiness.

"This mobile unit is very hands-on, innovative and engaging for the students," Gennings said.

The Mobile STEM Lab has traveled to elementary campuses across the district, offering students a chance to explore robotics, coding and

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Walmart gives a rare warning



Bicycles are displayed at a Walmart on April 16 in Groton, Conn. (AP Photo/Julia Demaree Nikhinson)

Company says higher prices are inevitable during trade war

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO,
AP RETAIL WRITER

NEW YORK — Walmart, which became the nation's largest retailer by making low prices a priority, has found itself in a place it's rarely been: Warning customers that prices will rise for goods ranging from bananas to car seats.

Executives at the \$750 billion company told industry analysts Thursday that they are doing everything in their power to absorb the higher costs from tariffs ordered by President Donald Trump.

Given the magnitude of the duties, however, the highest since the 1930s, higher prices are unavoidable and they will hurt Walmart customers already buffeted by inflation over the past three years.

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Bill that protects parents who misgender their kids passes Texas House

NOLAN D. MCCASKILL
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

AUSTIN — Texas parents who refuse to affirm their child's gender identity or sexual orientation would be exempt from state definitions of abuse and neglect under a bill the House passed Wednesday.

The House voted 85-59 to send the measure to the Senate for consideration.

It could not be considered abuse or neglect for anyone responsible

for the care, custody or welfare of a child to refuse to affirm the child's sexual orientation or gender identity under the proposal. That includes not using the child's preferred name or pronoun, regardless of whether the child's name was legally changed.

"All this bill does is it just provides clarity on the definitions of abuse and neglect, that it does not include when a mom and dad refuse to abide by a child's perceived

gender," Rep. Matt Shaheen, R-Plano, said.

Shaheen has said House Bill 1106 would strengthen parental rights and ensure families aren't torn apart by ideological disagreements in welfare cases. He said parents across the country have been accused of child abuse "for referring to their child's true sex," sometimes leading to the child's removal amid an investigation.

Opponents disputed the notion

that cases Shaheen referenced were simply about disagreements over a child's gender identity or sexual orientation.

"I have sincere concerns for this bill, as it opens the door for mistreatment and abuse of our children," Rep. Aicha Davis, D-DeSoto, said. "In each of the cases mentioned as precedent, there was severe, heartbreaking abuse involved."

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Arkansas overdose deaths in 2024 fall by 25.5 percent

CDC reports 3rd straight yearly decline, from 517 in 2023 to estimated 388

MY LY
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Drug overdose deaths in Arkansas fell by more than 25% last year, the third straight annual decline, although the number remained slightly above pre-pandemic levels, according to provisional federal data released Wednesday.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the state's reported fatal overdoses fell 25.5%, from 517 in 2023 to 385 in 2024.

The data includes only deaths that had been reported before a four-month cutoff period after the end of each year. Based on the percentage of deaths that were still under investigation at the time of the cutoff, the CDC estimated Arkansas' total number of overdose deaths last year to be 388.

Nationally, the estimated number of overdose deaths, including deaths that had not yet been reported by the four-month cutoff, fell 25.6%, from 106,881 in 2023 to 79,526 in 2024.

Among the 50 states, Wash-

ington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, Arkansas' percentage decrease from 2023 to 2024 ranked 24th highest.

West Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Virginia had the highest decrease in drug overdose deaths. West Virginia's number of deaths fell 42.4%, from 1,389 in 2023 to 800 in 2024.

Nevada and South Dakota were the only two states that saw an increase in overdose deaths, with the estimated number rising about 3.5% in Nevada and 2.3% in South Dakota.

Opioids were responsible for the bulk of the overdoses. Nationally, they were estimated to account for more than 54,000 deaths in 2024, down from more than 80,000 in 2023.

In Arkansas, opioids were responsible for 160 of last year's reported deaths, down from 310 a year earlier.

Despite the drop, Arkansas' number of fatal overdoses from opioids and other drugs remained higher than the provisional total of 362 overdoses

reported for 2019.

The provisional death total rose to 514 in 2020 and 627 in 2021. Final CDC data put the total number of overdose deaths in the state at 388 in 2019, 546 in 2020 and 637 in 2021, according to KFF, the health policy research organization formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Dr. Michael Mancino, program director for the Center for Addiction Services and Treatment at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, said the increased accessibility of naloxone, an anti-overdose drug, has been a key factor in the decrease in overdose deaths.

"It's probably most strongly a reflection of the wide availability of Narcan," Mancino said, referring to a brand name version of naloxone. "I think it's also a reflection of hopefully increased access to treatment with opiate agonist medications like Suboxone."

He said a law passed by Congress in December 2022



(Metro Newspaper Service)

as part of an omnibus spending bill had lifted a barrier to prescribing Suboxone, a brand name for drug buprenorphine, to treat opioid addiction.

The law included a provision eliminating a requirement for doctors to obtain a waiver from the federal Drug Enforcement Administration to prescribe the drug.

The legislation also requires physicians to obtain eight hours of training on substance abuse disorders before obtaining or

renewing a DEA registration allowing them to prescribe opioids.

Mancino said the clinic has seen a decrease in patient volume over the past year, "and we don't know if that's a reflection of more physicians being willing to provide the treatment out of their primary care practices."

"So it's the same treatment, not a different treatment. It's just that there may be more physicians willing to prescribe it (suboxone) now that the

waiver has been eliminated."

Mancino added that an increase in awareness of drugs like fentanyl could also be contributing to the decrease.

"I think it's also a reflection of public education where you know this, this pill or substance that you're using, though you may not think it's opioids, could potentially contain fentanyl," he said.

"So people are more aware that, you know, just because somebody hands you a pill that looks like a hydrocodone or a Xanax doesn't necessarily mean that that's hydrocodone or Xanax. It could be pressed fentanyl."

A 2021 state law requires naloxone or another anti-overdose drugs to be prescribed to patients receiving high doses of opioids, which the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement credited for 340% jump in naloxone prescription fills by Arkansans covered by Medicaid or private insurance in the 12-month period ending on June 30, 2022. The following year, prescription fills for naloxone rose 2.2%, the center reported in November.



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