

# VICTORIA ADVOCATE

SPORTS, B1

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## INFRASTRUCTURE

### Environmental activist raises concerns about proposed nuclear projects

LINDSEY PLOTKIN

The Victoria County Democratic Party welcomed environmental activist Diane Wilson as the guest speaker at its monthly meeting, where she discussed proposed nuclear power projects and an artificial intelligence data center planned for the region.

Wilson, founder of the San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper (SABEW), spoke about her decades-long efforts to hold major corporations accountable for environmental impacts and shared concerns about future industrial development along the Texas coast.

During her presentation, Wilson highlighted her work challenging companies such as Formosa Plastics and Dow Chemical, as well as the grassroots organizing efforts that have fueled many of those campaigns. She also provided attendees with information on how residents can contact elected officials and become involved in environmental advocacy efforts.

A significant portion of Wilson's presentation focused on proposals by Dow and Blue Energy to develop nuclear power facilities in the area. Wilson and SABEW have publicly opposed the projects, citing concerns about potential impacts on local ecosystems and industries.

Blue Energy filed applications and permits with the Port of Victoria and the Victoria Navigation District in October 2025 to conduct feasibility studies for a potential nuclear power plant.

Wilson told attendees that reports submitted by Blue Energy indi-

publicly opposed the projects, citing concerns about potential impacts on local ecosystems and industries.

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Diane Wilson, a local environmental activist, leads a discussion on the potential environmental impacts of building two nuclear power plants in Victoria and Calhoun County. (Lindsey Plotkin/Victoria Advocate)

SEE IMPACTS, A2

## MILITARY

### MAN BEHIND THE NAME

Honoring a hero where veterans seek healing

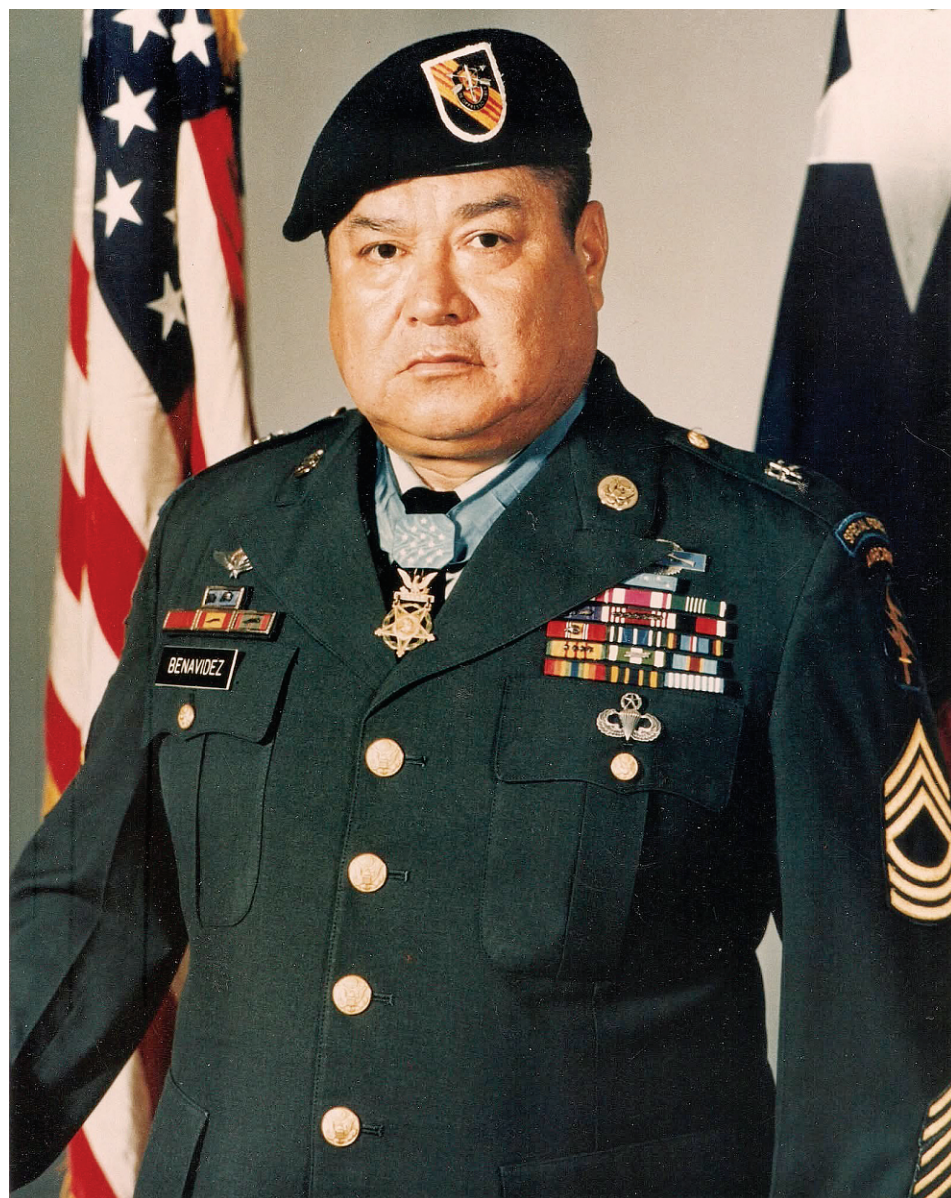
JAKOB GURLEY

A growing effort to rename the Victoria Veterans Affairs Clinic in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez is gaining momentum across the Crossroads, earning unanimous support from Victoria County commissioners and praise from Benavidez's family.

Victoria County Commissioners Court on Monday approved a resolution 2026-066, formally supporting the proposal to rename the facility the Roy P. Benavidez VA Clinic. The resolution will be shared with neighboring counties and forwarded to the office of Congressman Michael Cloud as supporters seek federal approval for the name change.

The effort has been led by local veterans advocate Frank Torres, who said he began organizing support after the opening of the area's new VA facility.

"I always wanted to change the name of the old clinic, but I'm glad I waited," Torres said. "Now we have this new facility that provides so many more services. This felt like the right time."



Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, a Crossroads native and Medal of Honor recipient, served in the U.S. Army Special Forces and became one of the most decorated soldiers of the Vietnam War. (Courtesy Photo)

Torres said he spent months meeting with county judges, veterans organizations and community leaders throughout the region to build support. According to Torres, every county judge he approached endorsed the proposal, and veterans organizations represented through the Victoria Veterans Council unanimously supported the effort.

"I didn't know how it was going to be received," Torres said. "But it's been overwhelmingly positive. Everybody has been supportive."

Torres believes naming the clinic after Benavidez would provide veterans with a personal connection to the facility while honoring one of the Crossroads' most celebrated military heroes.

Born in Lindenau and raised in Cuero and El Campo, Benavidez earned the Medal of Honor for his actions during a six-hour battle in Vietnam in 1968, where he suffered 37 bullet, bayonet and shrapnel wounds while rescuing fellow soldiers and coordinating their evacuation under intense enemy fire.

For Benavidez's daughter, Yvette Benavides-Garcia, news of the proposal came unexpectedly.

"I did not know about it," Garcia said. "I was pleasantly tagged in a social media post, and then I started seeing it pop up on different people's pages."

Garcia said learning about the effort was both surprising and deeply meaningful to her family.

"It's obviously an honor," she said. "My dad spent years speaking up for veterans and making sure they received the

SEE BENAVIDEZ, A2

## INVESTIGATION

### Deputy shooting claims Texas State student

ADVOCATE STAFF

**BRAZORIA COUNTY** — The family of an 18-year-old college student who was fatally shot by a Brazoria County sheriff's deputy says he was unarmed and not threatening anyone when he was killed Monday morning in the garage of his Lake Jackson home.

According to the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office, a deputy attempted to stop a vehicle near Farm-to-Market 2004 and This Way Street shortly after midnight Monday. Authorities said the driver failed to stop, leading deputies on a brief pursuit.

The chase ended when the vehicle entered the garage of a residence in the 100 block of Indian Warrior Trail in Lake Jackson.

The deputy then fired his weapon, striking the driver, identified as John Gabriel Mendoza Jr., 18. Mendoza was transported to a hospital, where he later died, according to the sheriff's office.

Family members dispute the circumstances surrounding the shooting and said Mendoza was still inside the vehicle when he was shot.

"They just shot through the window," Mendoza's great-aunt, Belinda Mendoza Ramirez, told ABC13. "Didn't give him a chance. I don't understand it."

Relatives gathered outside the home Monday evening, just feet from where the shooting occurred. The driver's side window of the vehicle was shattered, and family

members said Mendoza was unarmed at the time of the shooting.

"You don't get executed for minor stuff. You get a ticket or spend three nights in jail or whatever," Mendoza's uncle, Ricardo Casteneda, said. "You don't die from stuff like that. He was executed."

Family members said Mendoza was a former football player at Brazoswood High School and had completed his freshman year at Texas State University. He was preparing to return to school this fall as a sophomore.

The sheriff's office has not released details about the reason for the attempted traffic stop, what led the deputy to open fire or whether investigators recovered a weapon from the scene.

The investigation has been turned over to the Texas Rangers and the Brazoria County District Attorney's Office.

"We want justice. We just want to know what happened. No kid is perfect, but nobody deserves this," said Mendoza's great-aunt, Glenda Mendoza.

The deputy involved in the shooting has not been publicly identified. The sheriff's office said the deputy has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation, which is standard procedure following an officer-involved shooting.

Authorities have not released additional details as the investigation continues.



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## Why conservatives give better graduation speeches | VIEWPOINTS, A6

### WEATHER

**TODAY**  
Humid; an afternoon t-storm in spots



**TONIGHT**  
Partly cloudy, a stray t-storm; humid



### GAS PRICES

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