

Fall 2023



National Association of Benefits and Insurance Professionals

NABIP-Texas

The Official Publication of the National Association of Benefits and Insurance Professionals - Texas

Oh WATTs A Night!



2023 Hollis Recipient

Jessica Watts

8



10



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RON BYRD
VP Group Sales & Marketing
The Infinitus Group

Once again, another SOTX Summit has come and gone, but this one will forever hold a special place in my heart. My journey as a NABIP member has spanned over 30+ years, encompassing chapters in Iowa, Austin, Fort Worth, and now SOTX. Throughout this time, I've always been in awe of the annual tradition where national, state, and local chapters present their prestigious service award to deserving members. These awards, such as the Gordon (national), Hollis (state), and the Carnall (Fort Worth), have always been a moment of pure joy as we witnessed the expressions of gratitude on the faces of those who received recognition, named after individuals who have given so much to the associations they represent.

Upon relocating and becoming a part of the South Texas board, I noticed that a similar service award was missing. With the collective effort of the board, we established the Pete Jaramillo award to honor Pete's remarkable service in keeping our chapter thriving. Pete had been pivotal in South Texas's inception, serving as its inaugural president, and he ignited the spark that attracted local agents, giving birth to the South Texas chapter of NABIP-TX.

Due to Pete's unwavering dedication and leadership, our SOTX board awarded the first-ever Pete Jaramillo award to Pete himself in 2021. This award is now a biennial tradition, presented with each newly elected chapter president.

While our Executive Committee (EC) ultimately decides the award recipient, the board has the opportunity to suggest members worthy of the Jaramillo award.

I, too, submitted my own suggestions, but I soon learned through the grapevine that my name had been mentioned. Swiftly, I requested my name be withdrawn from consideration, recognizing that many other members had contributed significantly to SOTX for far longer than I had.

To my astonishment, the shock came during our 2023 summit when, for the first time, the Jaramillo award was bestowed upon someone other than a Jaramillo—and that someone was me. As the presenter, Hector Gracia, a past president, began reading the award winner's biography, I listened closely. When I heard him mention the winner had spent time in Iowa, I scanned the room, thinking there might be another former Iowa resident among us. However, it became clear that I was the one being honored when Hector delved into my involvement with the Johnston Little League board and my past presidency of the Midwest Hockey League. At first, I couldn't believe it, and I was admittedly taken aback. "Not me, please," I thought.

Upon meeting Hector on stage and receiving the award, it finally sank in. I was humbled and filled with gratitude as I searched for Pete in the room and expressed my thanks to him. I was fortunate enough to FaceTime with my wife, who had flown to Oregon ahead of me to prepare for our son's wedding. Thanks to Lisa Gracia's kindness, my wife, Deena, was able to witness the presentation live over the phone.

After the ceremony, Hector pulled me aside and said, "I know you asked us to remove your name, but as a board, we felt that you've done so much for our chapter, and we're here on South Padre Island today because of your vision." I responded by acknowledging that our presence on the island was a collective effort, shaped

by the lessons I had learned from all the other chapters I had been part of. We owe our success to a dedicated SOTX board and membership that made it all happen. My love for SOTX runs deep—I consider it my home.

Thank you for the cherished memories, and I will forever hold the Pete Jaramillo award close to my heart.

Also in this issue is the NABIP-TX, 2023 Hollis award winner - Jessica Watts. Look for her story on page 14.



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LEGISLATIVE NEWS



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When the impeachment trial of Attorney General Ken Paxton began several weeks ago, we told you it was neither a criminal or civil proceeding, but rather a political trial. And the result rendered over the weekend was certainly a political acquittal. After spending two weeks listening to both sides make their case, Texas Senators voted to acquit Paxton on all 16 articles of impeachment. Because of the vote, Paxton will remain in office.

In closing arguments on Friday, Paxton's legal team said the prosecution's case was full of holes, circumstantial evidence and misdirection. And they framed Paxton as the victim of a "witch hunt" orchestrated by Texas House leadership, "the Bush dynasty" and insubordinate former deputies-turned-whistleblowers in his office.

The House impeachment managers insisted that they proved their claims of bribery and corruption, arguing that the jury of 30 senators had no choice but to convict. "Unlike the public servants here today, he has no regard for the principles of honor and integrity," said impeachment manager Rep. Andrew Murr (R-Junction). "He has betrayed us and the people of Texas, and if he is given the opportunity he will continue to abuse the power given to him."

The House case centered on Paxton's relationship with Austin real estate

investor Nate Paul, his friend and political donor. The prosecution alleged that Paxton repeatedly abused his office to help Paul investigate his enemies, delay foreclosure sales of his properties, gain the upper hand in a lawsuit with a charity and obtain confidential files on the police investigating him. The closing arguments ended a nine-day trial during which the House called thirteen witnesses and the defense called four.

No article received more than 14 of the required 21 votes to convict. Only two of 19 Republican Senators, Bob Nichols of Jacksonville and Kelly Hancock of North Richland Hills, voted in favor of convicting for any article — a stark contrast to the more than 70% of House Republicans who impeached the attorney general in May. Some observers said Senators appeared resentful that the House had impeached Paxton, forcing them to take public votes on whether to convict him — a divisive issue for the Republican base.

But Paxton's legal troubles are not over. He still faces state securities fraud charges, a case that has stretched out for eight years and counting, starting with an indictment just months after he took office in 2015. The case has been delayed for years by pretrial disputes — including a back-and-forth battle over the trial venue that saw it moved to Houston from Collin County, which Paxton represented as a state lawmaker. And Paxton has been under investigation by the FBI since October 2020, although no charges have been filed.

Federal investigators began their investigation after several top Paxton deputies went to the FBI and alleged the attorney general had committed crimes, including bribery, while trying to help Paul. Justice Department prosecutors who typically handle high-profile public corruption cases took over the case in February.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick broke his personal silence Saturday on the impeachment after the Senate voted for acquittal, blasting the House's impeachment process as deeply flawed. "The speaker and his team rammed through the first impeachment

of a statewide official in Texas in over 100 years while paying no attention to the precedent that the House set in every other impeachment before," Patrick said from the dais after the verdict was finalized.

House Speaker Dade Phelan (R-Beaumont), fired back, saying Patrick ended the trial by "confessing his bias and placing his contempt for the people's House on full display." Patrick was the presiding officer of the trial — effectively the judge — and his feelings on the matter were the subject of much speculation. While he got praise for how he handled certain aspects, like the trial rules, he also drew scrutiny for accepting \$3 million from a pro-Paxton group in late June.

Patrick also called for a state constitutional amendment reforming the impeachment process. He proposed that all House testimony should be given under oath and subject to cross examination, adding that an impeached official "should not be put on unpaid leave" while awaiting trial. Patrick also said "millions of taxpayer dollars have been wasted on this impeachment" and called for a "full audit" of the House's spending on it.

Phelan responded with a statement that was just as hostile, saying Patrick "attacked the House for standing up against corruption." "His tirade disrespects the Constitutional impeachment process afforded to us by the founders of this great state," Phelan said. "The inescapable conclusion is that today's outcome appears to have been orchestrated from the start, cheating the people of Texas of justice."

There is no love lost between Lt. Gov. Patrick and Speaker Phelan, who have previously battled over policy issues. But Patrick's speech represented a new escalation in their feud and came after he withheld his personal opinion on the impeachment for months, trying to show he was taking the trial seriously.

Hours after the acquittal, Paxton's far-right supporters doubled down on their promises for swift retribution against fellow Republicans who supported his

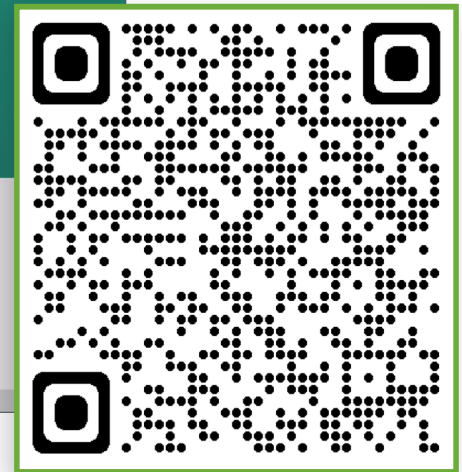
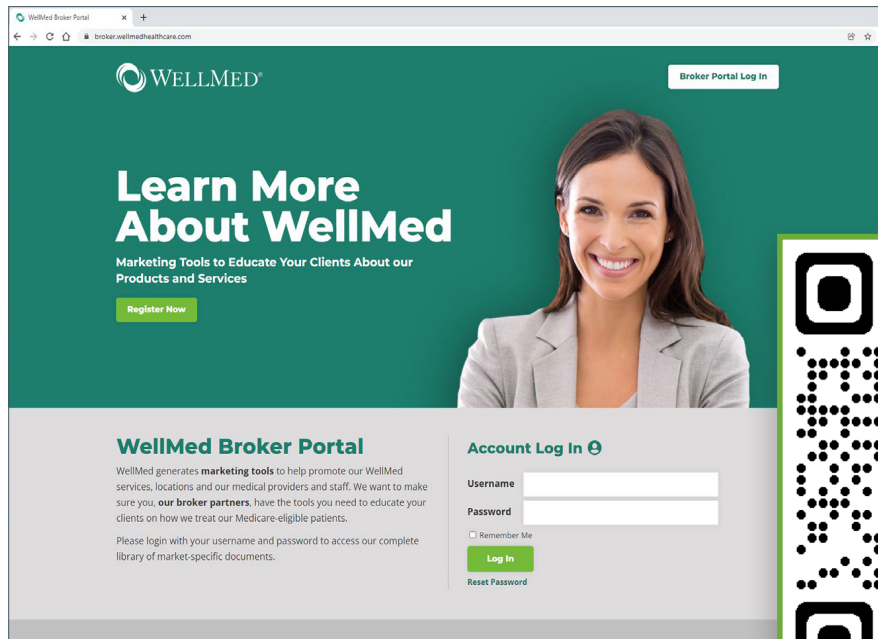
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NABIP-TX President, Michael Ledgerwood Almost Arrested

By Editor, Ron Byrd

During his participation in the 2023 NABIP-SOTX Summit on South Padre Island, Michael Ledgerwood, the President of NABIP-TX State, found himself on the verge of getting arrested due to a longstanding city ordinance prohibiting the wearing of ties.

Ledgerwood had journeyed to South Padre Island for the NABIP-SOTX Summit, where he was set to administer the oath of office to the newly appointed SOTX board members. However, the Mayor of the city noticed that Ledgerwood was wearing a tie for the occasion.

In response, the Mayor promptly called upon the City Sheriff, who approached Ledgerwood while he was on stage during the board member swearing-in ceremony. The Sheriff brandished a pair of scissors and warned Ledgerwood that he risked being incarcerated if he persisted in wearing his tie.

Faced with the prospect of jail time, Ledgerwood had no choice but to acquiesce to the Sheriff's request and allowed him to sever his tie. Ledgerwood complied without hesitation.

Following the separation of Ledgerwood from his tie, the NABIP-SOTX 2023 Summit proceeded as planned and proved to be yet another successful event. Ledgerwood emerged as a gallant figure who played the role of a well-dressed man reluctantly parting with his cherished tie.

We extend our gratitude to Michael for his visit to SOTX and for administering the oath to our newly appointed officers.



Two Republican Senators Grilled on PBM's

By Ron Byrd

During their Senate confirmation hearing on Wednesday, two Republican nominees for Federal Trade Commission (FTC) seats faced rigorous questioning regarding the FTC's approach to regulating pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), often referred to as the "middle men" in the pharmaceutical supply chain.

Melissa Holyoak, currently Utah's solicitor general, stressed the importance of affordable prescription drugs for Americans and expressed her support for a more assertive stance by the agency in regulating the PBM industry. On the other hand, Andrew Ferguson, now Virginia's solicitor general, acknowledged the complexity of the PBM market and advocated for awaiting the pending findings of the FTC's study on PBMs. He suggested that if the examination reveals unfair or deceptive practices by PBMs, the FTC should take action.

President Joe Biden nominated Holyoak and Ferguson for the two vacant Republican seats on the five-member commission in July. If confirmed by the Senate, they will join FTC Chair Lina Khan and Commissioners Alvaro Bedoya and Rebecca Kelly Slaughter. Slaughter, who is

nominated for another term, also appeared before the Senate panel.

PBMs play a pivotal role in negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies on behalf of health plans, significantly influencing patient access to medications and drug costs.

The FTC has signaled its intention to adopt a more stringent regulatory approach towards PBMs. In July, the agency cautioned PBMs against relying on outdated reports and studies from 2004 to 2014, asserting that they no longer accurately reflect the consumer drug distribution market.

The FTC is presently scrutinizing the business practices of major PBMs, including CVS Caremark, Express Scripts Inc., OptumRx Inc., Humana Inc., Prime Therapeutics LLC, and MedImpact Healthcare Systems Inc. Ferguson referred to this ongoing review in his Senate testimony.

In addition to PBMs, senators questioned the nominees about the FTC's regulatory efforts concerning robocalls and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. Sen. Maria Cantwell, the committee's chair, emphasized the crucial role of the

FTC in safeguarding consumers from deceptive, unfair, and anticompetitive practices. Sen. Jon Tester expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the FTC's "Do Not Call Registry" program and sought the nominees' views on addressing robocall issues.

Both Holyoak and Ferguson expressed support for robust enforcement against robocalls. Regarding artificial intelligence, Holyoak suggested that the FTC would apply existing laws but would be open to discussing potential regulatory gaps. Ferguson stressed that the FTC should take action against AI technologies that violate its regulations, with the possibility of Congress establishing a regulatory framework.

Commissioner Rebecca Kelly Slaughter faced questioning from Republican senators who raised concerns about FTC Chair Lina Khan's perceived aggressive stance on proposed mergers. Slaughter defended the confidentiality of communications between ethics officials and the chair, citing a commission rule. Sen. Deb Fischer inquired about the potential for bipartisan cooperation within the commission, to which Slaughter expressed commitment to working with differing viewpoints.

Sen. Dan Sullivan voiced concerns about agency overreach and asked each nominee if they would ensure that the agency's statutory authority is evident in every opinion they publish. Slaughter promised to ensure clear statutory authority for all actions taken by the FTC, while Ferguson and Holyoak agreed to provide explanations based on the majority or dissenting positions.

A full Senate committee vote on the nominees has yet to be scheduled.

Five Key Insights into the Latest Drug Price Negotiations



By William Crabtree

The Biden administration has made a significant move by selecting the initial 10 high-priced prescription drugs that will undergo federal price negotiations, challenging the influence of the pharmaceutical industry. This marks a pivotal moment in the ongoing struggle to regulate the continually escalating costs of medications for senior citizens and eventually for all Americans.

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act granted the federal government the authority to negotiate prices for specific high-cost drugs within the Medicare program. The list of drugs chosen by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will expand over time.

The first batch of eligible drugs includes treatments for diabetes, blood clots, blood cancers, arthritis, and heart disease. These drugs accounted for approximately \$50 billion in expenses from June 2022 to May 2023.

The United States has stood out as an exception in terms of drug pricing, with drug manufacturers charging Americans significantly more than residents of other nations merely because they could. President Biden has expressed his outrage at this disparity, emphasizing the importance of these negotiations. Democratic lawmakers have welcomed this announcement, while the pharmaceutical industry, which has launched numerous legal challenges against the law, has condemned it.

Pharmaceutical companies have until October 2nd to provide data on their drugs to CMS, which will then make

initial pricing offers in February, commencing negotiations set to conclude by the following August. These negotiated prices are slated to take effect in January 2026.

Here are five key points to consider regarding the impact of these developments:

Significance of the Initiative: For a long time, Medicare has had control over the pricing of its services, such as physician and hospital payments for its 65 million beneficiaries. However, it was previously barred from participating in prescription drug pricing, which it only started covering in 2006. The pharmaceutical industry has successfully resisted negotiations with the government until now. While the first 10 drugs selected for negotiations are used by a minority of patients (9 million), CMS plans to negotiate prices for 50 drugs in the market by 2029. This move has symbolic significance and financial implications, given the \$50 billion spent by Medicare on these 10 drugs in a 12-month period.

The long-term consequences remain uncertain, with concerns raised by the drug industry about stifled drug development due to these negotiations. However, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that only a few drugs per year may not be developed as a result of this policy. The Biden administration believes that controlling drug prices is essential to address the soaring costs of healthcare in the United States.

Impact on Medicare Patients: While some patients may experience significant cost savings, the primary objective of Medicare's price negotiation policy is to reduce overall costs for the Medicare program and taxpayers. The selected drugs range from highly specialized, expensive medications like the cancer drug Imbruvica to common drugs like Eliquis. Patients who face

substantial copayments for their medications under Medicare drug plans may benefit from these negotiations, with additional relief provided by the Inflation Reduction Act, which caps drug spending by Medicare recipients at \$2,000 per year starting in 2025.

Effects on Non-Medicare Individuals: Speculation exists about whether reducing drug prices in Medicare will lead to higher prices for privately insured individuals. However, this would only be true if drug companies are not already pricing their products as high as the private market allows. An alternative theory suggests that Medicare price negotiations could empower private health plans to negotiate more effectively with drug companies, potentially resulting in lower prices for the privately insured.

Pharmaceutical Industry Response: Although negotiated prices won't take effect until 2026, pharmaceutical companies have already initiated legal challenges to stop the implementation of this new program. Several drug companies, along with organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), have filed lawsuits citing various legal arguments. Some companies claim their First Amendment rights are being violated, while others argue that the program coerces them into selling their products at inadequate prices. Legal experts anticipate that these lawsuits may not succeed, as participation in Medicare is voluntary for drug companies, and they must adhere to its rules.

Changing Drug Prices by 2026: In theory, drug prices could change before the negotiated prices take effect in 2026. CMS has indicated that negotiations for a drug on its list will

be canceled or postponed if a cheaper generic version enters the market and gains significant traction. For example, two biosimilar versions of Stelara, a Johnson & Johnson drug on the list, are set to launch in early 2025. If successful, this could prevent CMS from demanding a lower price for Stelara. However, certain drugs on the list have retained exclusive rights for extended periods, with limited competition expected until well into the future, such as in the case of Enbrel. These developments signify a substantial shift in drug pricing negotiations within the United States, with potential implications for both Medicare beneficiaries and the broader healthcare landscape.



Jessica Watts
This Year's
Hollis Roberson,
Tom Schilling,
Volunteer / Year
Winner

In the annals of NABIP-TX history, the collective memory holds no recollection of anyone achieving the rare feat of sweeping all three major awards while participating in the state convention—until the year 2023 arrived.

In a groundbreaking moment for our association, Jessica Watts emerged as the remarkable recipient of not one, but all three prestigious accolades: the Hollis Roberson Award, the Tom Schilling Outstanding Texan of the Year, and the Volunteer of the Year Award. Her dedication and tireless service, spanning many years at the local, state, regional, and national levels within NABIP, undoubtedly justified this clean sweep during the 2023 State Convention, which took place from April 24th to April 26th in Houston.

The evening unfolded with the presentation of various state awards, setting the stage for the much-anticipated revelation of the recipient of our association's highest honor—the Hollis Roberson Award. Serving as the emcee for this pivotal moment was none other than the 2021 awardee, Ed Oleksiak, who commenced his speech with these words:



It is my honor and pleasure to announce this year's Hollis Roberson Award to a most deserving individual. This member not only meets, but exceeds, all the attributes and accomplishments while going above the call of duty. They are able to do this without personal gain. To be qualified for this highest award of our association. This member has many cumulative years of contributed time and talent to further not only the health insurance industry, but also our clients while supporting a variety of community needs. The skills, knowledge and determination of this individual denote a true professional and deeply compassionate person. This person continues to benefit our industry in many ways.

- Written Countless CE courses? Check
- Gifted speaker at association events? Check
- Managed and organized major association events? Check
- Presented CE Webinars and classes? Check
- Lobbied for Healthcare initiatives at the State & National level? Check
- Volunteered in community organizations? Check
- Completed many professional designations? Check
- Skillfully lead a local TAHU Chapter as President? Check

Born and raised in Temple, TX, this person was the President of their High School Student Council, probably the first indication that they would be a natural leader! During her college years, she became involved in the University's Student Senate all the while carrying a full academic schedule. She earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Financial Services and Planning from Baylor University. But she wasn't finished with a bachelor's degree, she went on to earn a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from Tarleton State University. By now this talented and dedicated lady probably knows who this introduction is all about!

This remarkable person has been a member of our association since 2009 and has served in many positions and on numerous committees, these are just a few:

- NABIP (NAHU) Legislative Council 2013
- NABIP (NAHU) National Legislative Council Chair 2019-20
- Austin Professional Development Committee Chair 2021
- Austin Chapter President 2020-21
- She is currently the Austin Immediate Past President (2 years running!)
- Wrote over 10 White Papers on compliance related subjects and the ACA.
- Delivered over 37 presentations on timely and relevant health insurance topics.
- Achieved the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) designation.
- Certified Employee Benefit Specialist (CEBS)

Various Other Local & Civic Organizations

- President, Toastmasters (Austin Westlake Chapter) 2012 to present.
- Volunteer/Mentor, SHRM Student Conference 2013
- Volunteer Meals on Wheels, Hays County 2022-present
- Member/Volunteer, Austin Junior League 2011-15
- Volunteer Mobile Loaves & Fishes
- Volunteer Food-In-Tummies
- Volunteer, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid Clinic



Several people have said she is the only person they know who has read the entire Affordable Care Act front to back!

She recently traveled with her young son to Mexico on a church mission trip supporting a local children's home. She is currently a finalist for the "Austin Under 40 Award" presented by the Austin Junior League.

Here's what a few members have said about working with her:

1. "I've worked many years with her in our Austin and Texas chapters. From writing CE courses and teaching them to Professional Development Day Chair to updating local chapter By Laws, to Austin President and NABIP (formerly NAHU) Capitol Conference Chair and many other positions in between. I continue to be impressed with her knowledge of our industry and dedication to serving in many different roles in chapter leadership." Linda New, Hollis Roberson Recipient, Past Texas and Austin President
2. "During my term as Austin President-Elect we worked closely for the benefit of the Austin and Texas chapters and her dedication is commendable. She served as the Austin chapter president in 2020 which was an incredibly difficult year for the association I watched as she led her board to transition quickly to unprecedented virtual meetings to provide ongoing meetings for our members." Victoria Trevino (Austin President)
3. "She has authored numerous White Papers and developed countless CE presentations for the health insurance industry focusing on compliance. My personal observation is she exhibits a quiet style of leadership that lets her actions speak much louder than her words. She consistently accomplishes every task in the most professional and detailed way possible. A compassionate person and mother who knows how to balance all aspects of her busy life." Ron Buffum, Hollis Roberson Recipient, Past Texas President and Past President of the Texoma and Austin chapters

She currently is Vice President for Compliance and a Consultant at the Frost Insurance Agency Austin, TX. She has worked at Frost since 2016. A mother to an 8-year-old son, Robert Wesley. With that, I now invite all previous Hollis Roberson Award Recipients to please rise and help escort this year's recipient and our youngest recipient, Jessica Watts, to the stage!

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Let's Connect!

CHAPTER BRAGGIN



NABIP-SOTX Michael Gabrielson- President

It's been an exceptionally scorching summer in Texas! The state has experienced record-breaking temperatures, and we've all been seeking ways to escape the relentless heat. Here in South Texas, we embarked on our Annual 2023 Summit at South Padre Island. Kicking off the event with a scenic sunset bay cruise, our attendees and sponsors swapped their loafers and heels for flip-flops and shorts, relishing a well-deserved excursion on the water. As we cruised past dolphins with SpaceX as a backdrop, new friendships were forged, and valuable connections were established, setting a vibrant tone for the Summit.

The subsequent day was brimming with activities, featuring 5 hours of Continuing Education sessions, delectable cuisine, indoor volleyball matches, ice cream treats, and engaging interactions among the 100-plus attendees. The Summit commenced with a local tradition: the enforcement of the "NO TIE Proclamation" by a South Padre Island police officer. State President Michael Ledgerwood was brought before the assembly as the officer recited the proclamation. At its conclusion, the police officer cut Mr. Ledgerwood's tie, sparing him from being led away in handcuffs.

The informative CE presentations covered a range of topics, including updates on legislation, the dos and don'ts of Medicare, and the intricacies of fully insured and self-funded group medical plans. The attendees were actively engaged, and the Q&A sessions in each workshop provided invaluable insights. The evening culminated with a delectable Taquiza Bar and a spectacular fireworks display over the beach. The icing on the cake was signing up seven new members, making the entire event truly rewarding.

With two major events under our belt, we've successfully enlisted 16 new members and remain committed to exploring avenues to deliver value to our agents and community.



From The Desk Of Mike & Shannon Meroney NABIP-TX Lobbyist

Update from the Hill

School Vouchers

MERONEY MEMO

(continued from page 6)

removal from office. In particular, they vowed a scorched-earth campaign against Speaker Phelan, casting him as the ringleader responsible for the impeachment process and calling for him to resign immediately.

“You and your band of RINOs are now on notice,” Defend Texas Liberty PAC leader Jonathan Stickland tweeted at Phelan on Saturday, as voting continued in the Texas Senate. “You will be held accountable for this entire sham. We will never stop. Retire now.”

Paxton’s impeachment trial was the latest — and among the most consequential — battle in an ongoing civil war between the Texas GOP’s establishment members and a well-funded right wing that has for years claimed the party is insufficiently conservative.

The animosity comes ahead of a special session — likely in October — over school choice legislation that has already turned into a lightning rod for conflict between Senate and House Republicans. For the past several legislative sessions, rural House Republicans have blocked voucher legislation favored by the Senate, and Phelan and Patrick also spent much of the summer warring over the details of their chambers’ respective property tax bills.

School vouchers were already one of the most contentious issues in Texas politics. The proposal has long pitted the Texas Senate against the Texas House of Representatives, where Democrats and rural Republicans have formed a firewall against it. But throw in Attorney General Ken Paxton’s impeachment trial and acquittal — and the explosive intra-party conflict it has caused in the Capitol — and state lawmakers are bracing for an even more epic showdown over the issue this fall.

Gov. Greg Abbott has not announced the date yet, but he has long indicated that he would call lawmakers back to Austin after Paxton’s trial to revisit his signature push to let parents use taxpayers dollars to take their kids out of public school.

Getting legislative approval was never going to be easy. The chambers spent months gridlocked on the issue during the regular session. Any kind of deal would likely require delicate negotiations and cooperation between the chambers — something that has been difficult with Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and House Speaker Dade Phelan. Earlier this year, Patrick and Phelan fought bitterly

and publicly for months over how to cut property taxes — a goal that had near-unanimous support on both sides of the Capitol. “School choice” has faced opposition from a majority in the House for years, complicating negotiations.

After the House voted overwhelmingly to impeach Paxton in May, the Senate acquitted him on all 16 articles of impeachment considered in the trial. Lt. Gov. Patrick — effectively the judge — ended the trial by blasting the House for how it handled the impeachment, saying it was rushed and calling for an audit of the House’s spending. Speaker Phelan shot back, accusing Patrick of “cheating the people of Texas of justice” and “placing his contempt for the people’s House on full display.”

Multiple Senate sources have described deliberations that began in good faith, but turned toward an acquittal consensus as political calculation set in among Republicans... with six Senators “who were ready to be the 21st vote”. It appeared that the Senate may have been close to the threshold for conviction, but several Republican Senators did not want to take a tough vote if they could not get there.

Since the acquittal, AG Paxton has alleged that the Biden administration,

working in cahoots with certain Texas Republicans, was behind the failed attempt to impeach him on charges of bribery and corruption. Paxton blasted fellow conservatives who he believes betrayed him and the party, including Speaker Phelan, former George W. Bush adviser Karl Rove, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and the all-Republican Court of Criminal Appeals. Paxton excoriated Cornyn as a poor representative for Texans and said a strong candidate needs to challenge him in 2026 — adding that he may be the man to do so.

In an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson posted on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, they did not discuss at length the substance of the impeachment case against the attorney general. Paxton said he believed the impeachment was retribution for lawsuits he filed challenging the results of the 2020 presidential election in several states as well as lawsuits Paxton filed challenging Biden's policies.

Paxton then went on a tour of conservative talk radio last week, revealing new details about his impeachment trial and political ambitions. Among other things, Paxton discussed how much the trial cost him — over \$4 million — and vowed to get involved in primary challenges to House Republicans who voted to impeach him. "I'm highly motivated," Paxton said. "I'll be spending a lot of time in Beaumont. I'll be spending a lot of time ... in Kerrville. I'll be spending a lot of time in Collin County." Beaumont is the hometown of House Speaker Dade Phelan, while Kerrville is a city in the district of Rep. Andrew Murr, who chaired the House impeachment managers. Collin County is Paxton's home county where all the Republican state representatives voted to impeach him.

Speaker Phelan accused Lt. Gov. Patrick of rigging the trial. "For the armchair legal strategists' opinion on what should have been done differently, I'd remind them there is nothing else that could have been done — the fix was in from the start," Phelan said in an op-ed he wrote for his hometown newspaper - the Beaumont Enterprise - published Friday afternoon.

Patrick responded to the op-ed in a lengthy tweet, saying Phelan's belief "is disgusting and proves he is unworthy of his leadership position." Patrick has repeatedly denied accusations of being biased as the trial judge and went on a tirade earlier Friday against a Democratic state senator who criticized his role. With Patrick under fire on multiple fronts, the Senate Republican Caucus issued a statement Friday night saying any allegations that Patrick sought to sway the jury were "not just deeply misleading, but factually incorrect."

In interviews, Paxton has vowed political payback, and his allies are proving ready to assist him. The State Republican Executive Committee (SREC) passed a resolution Saturday calling for Phelan's resignation.

Yesterday, four whistleblowers who were fired after reporting Paxton to the FBI vowed to continue their legal fight with their former boss, promising to expose his alleged wrongdoing by forcing him and others to publicly testify. "We are not going away," Blake Brickman, who served as deputy attorney general for policy and strategy under Paxton, said at a Monday news conference. "For us this case has always been about more than money. It's about truth. It's about justice."

The whistleblowers — Brickman, David Maxwell, Mark Penley and Ryan Vassar — were among a small group of top Paxton deputies who had first-hand knowledge of his relationship with real estate investor Nate Paul. At Paxton's impeachment trial they each testified about their growing concerns in 2020 that Paxton was illegally using his office to help Paul, a friend and political donor, as the real estate investor's faltering business empire faced an FBI investigation, looming bankruptcies and a litany of related lawsuits.

And now AG Paxton is threatening legal action against Comptroller Glenn Hegar if Paxton does not receive back pay for the period he was suspended and awaiting his impeachment trial in the Texas Senate. Paxton's office charges that the comptroller violated state law and the Texas Constitution "by refusing to issue salary payments to a duly elected statewide officeholder." In an interview with Lubbock radio host Chad Hasty, Hegar stood by the decision. He suggested that there were two state laws guiding his office's decision.

The rumor is that the special session will be called during the second week of October. We'll keep you informed along the way.

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Booth, Tonya	Fort Worth	Diamond	Bradberry, Cherrie	Texoma	Gold	Ott, Rick	Coastal Bend	Gold
Harrington Paula	South Texas	Diamond	Brown, Jesse	Houston	Gold	Crisher, Krista Palmer	Fort Worth	Gold
Rivera, Michael	Houston	Diamond	Budinsky, Marty	Houston	Gold	Pancerz Claire	Dallas	Gold
Ashmore, Elizabeth	Lubbock	Ruby	Burgess, Robbie	Coastal Bend	Gold	Parkey, Sarah	Coastal Bend	Gold
Bellman, Mark	Austin	Ruby	Burkholder Karen	Dallas	Gold	Perry, Amy (Adams)	Fort Worth	Gold
Cartier, Fred	San Antonio	Ruby	Byrd, Ron	South Texas	Gold	Perryman, Melissa	Austin	Gold
Harris, Polly	Coastal Bend	Ruby	Campos, Blake	Houston	Gold	Phifer, Joe	Dallas	Gold
Robinson, Judith	East TX	Ruby	Castillo, Iris	South Texas	Gold	Potter, Amanda	LoneStar	Gold
Shappell, Trace	East TX	Ruby	Christensen, Elizabeth	Fort Worth	Gold	Raymond, Garrin	Houston	Gold
Southan, Tamela	Dallas	Ruby	Clark, Cheryl	Lubbock	Gold	Reynolds, Caleb	Austin	Gold
Villagran, Denise	Coastal Bend	Ruby	Clingan, Nedra	San Antonio	Gold	Richiuso, Christine	Dallas	Gold
Waller, Doris	Dallas	Ruby	Crawford, David	Fort Worth	Gold	Rivera, Marisa	South Texas	Gold
Wilson, Tom	Texoma	Ruby	DePaoli, Allison	San Antonio	Gold	Roberts, Danielle	Fort Worth	Gold
Alt, Sharon	Fort Worth	Platinum	Douglas, Paul	East TX	Gold	Sherman, Joe	East TX	Gold
Avery, Wendy	Dallas	Platinum	Douglas Sandy	East TX	Gold	Smith, Craig	East TX	Gold
Berry, Ernest	Lubbock	Platinum	Dytrich, Nancy	Austin	Gold	Snyder, Stephen	Dallas	Gold
Blair, Mary Ann	East TX	Platinum	Elliott-Harmon, Patti	Coastal Bend	Gold	Stair, B. Gene	Austin	Gold
Bolden, Michael	West Texas	Platinum	Eller, Darla	LoneStar	Gold	Stanley, Jennifer	Dallas	Gold
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Cottar, Tom	Houston	Platinum	Gonzalez, Carlos	South Texas	Gold	Thorne, Roblyn	Austin	Gold
Debler, John	Coastal Bend	Platinum	Goodman, Cindy	Dallas	Gold	Trevino, Siboney	Houston	Gold
DeLeon, Rachelle	N/M	Platinum	Garcia, Hector	South Texas	Gold	Trevino, Lisa	South Texas	Gold
Fristoe, Kelly	Texoma	Platinum	Grogan, Wayne	Fort Worth	Gold	Trevino, Victoria	Austin	Gold
Hayes Judith	West Texas	Platinum	Hamilton, Leawhine	Fort Worth	Gold	Vasquez Ramirez, Val	San Antonio	Gold
Johnson, Sandy	San Antonio	Platinum	Hamm, Phillip	Houston	Gold	Waldron, Gary	Dallas	Gold
Keel, Ben	Houston	Platinum	Hebert, Laura	Coastal Bend	Gold	Wallace, Kasey	Houston	Gold
Kelly, Renee	Austin	Platinum	Herrington Phyllis	Coastal Bend	Gold	Wallin, Johnny	Fort Worth	Gold
Ledgerwood, Michael	Houston	Platinum	Hoffman, Crystal	Houston	Gold	Wild Trei	Dallas	Gold
Lee, Susan	Houston	Platinum	Holloway, Ryan	Fort Worth	Gold	Willingham, Sean	San Antonio	Gold
Pleasants, Jennifer	Coastal Bend	Platinum	Irwin, Maria	Austin	Gold	Ybarra, Valeria	Coastal Bend	Gold
Rios-Carl, Elizabeth	El Paso	Platinum	Jaques, Kevin	Austin	Gold	Young, Peter	Coastal Bend	Gold
Rolf, Rita	Dallas	Platinum	Jones, Jamie	Houston	Gold	Brattelli Wendy	East TX	Silver
Scott, Nicole	San Antonio	Platinum	Keathley, Bryan	Fort Worth	Gold	Phillips, Gena	Houston	Silver
Simtang, Michael	Austin	Platinum	Kirkhart, Taylor	Dallas	Gold	Rasmussen, Reid	Austin	Silver
Smith, Mike	Fort Worth	Platinum	Knight, Jack	Panhandle	Gold	Bay, Kimberly Lee	Forth Worth	Other
Splawn, W. Craig	Houston	Platinum	Lawlis, Rita	Lubbock	Gold	New, Linda	Austin	Other
Spragins, Jackie	Texoma	Platinum	Le, Duong	Fort Worth	Gold	Rippey, Chaliese	Forth Worth	Other
Trebing, C. Louanne	Dallas	Platinum	Leal, Gary	Houston	Gold	Skinner, Patrick	Dallas	Other
Walker, Kenneth	Austin	Platinum	Lee, Diane	Coastal Bend	Gold	Diamond	\$1,200 +	\$100 Mo
York, Melanie	Fort Worth	Platinum	Long, Scott	Houston	Gold	Ruby	\$600+	\$50 Mo
Adams, Carla	San Antonio	Gold	Lopez, Melissa	San Antonio	Gold	Platinum	\$300+	\$25 Mo
Ahlquist, Neldia	Houston	Gold	Martin, Patricia	Houston	Gold	Gold	\$150+	\$12.50 Mo
Antongiovanni, Joanna	San Antonio	Gold	Meason, Toby	Panhandle	Gold	Silver	<\$150	
Bentley, Beau	East Texas	Gold	Miller, D'Ann	East TX	Gold	As of 10/2022		
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