

WINTER 2024

NEWSLETTER

Office of El Paso County Precinct 2
Commissioner David Stout



HELLO NEIGHBORS!

The Precinct 2 office has been busy this fall and throughout the year. Inside this newsletter you will find an update on the bond proposal that went to the voters this November; information regarding the modernization of the Bridge of the Americas port of entry; an explainer on what we can expect during the 89th Legislative session starting in January 2025 and other news around the Precinct 2 and the El Paso County Community. As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to my office with anything on your mind.



@CommishStout



@CommStout



Commissioner David Stout

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

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EL PASO COUNTY BOND UPDATE

In February 2024, El Paso County initiated a series of public meetings to gather input from residents on priority projects for potential bond funding. This community-driven process led the Bond Advisory Committee to recommend a list of projects and a financing structure. On November 5th, El Paso County voters had the opportunity to decide on five propositions to fund these initiatives. The results reflect both successes and challenges, with the community approving three initiatives and disapproving two.

The following propositions were on the ballot:

- A: Parks & Recreation: \$95.6 million**
- B: New Office of Medical Examiner: \$26.7 million**
- C: Courthouse, Sub courthouses, and Related Annexes**
- D: County Coliseum Renovation & Modernization**
- E: New Animal Shelter: \$32.7 million**

Propositions A, B, and E were approved by voters, while Propositions C and D did not pass. Here’s a closer look at what the approved projects will accomplish:

- **Proposition A:** Includes 19 improvement projects, with five specifically for Ascarate Park, enhancing recreational spaces and amenities.
- **Proposition B:** Funds the construction of a new Office of the Medical Examiner, responsible for medicolegal death investigations, including unexpected deaths in the county.
- **Proposition E:** Establishes a new animal shelter, improving access to services such as shelters for stray animals, vaccinations, spay and neuter programs, and community training.

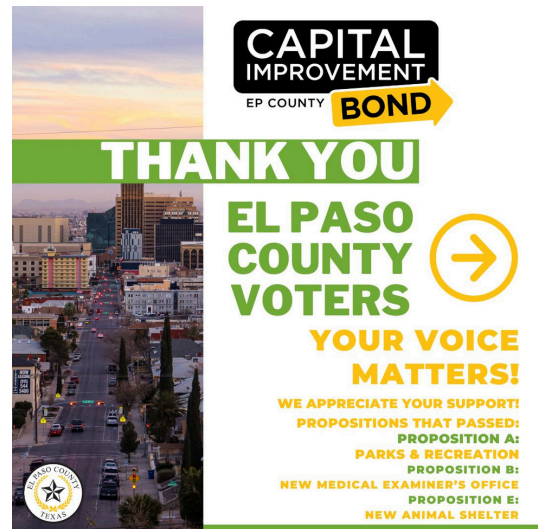
While Propositions C and D did not pass, Commissioner Stout remains committed to finding alternative funding sources to address these important initiatives. Proposition C included plans for the Corbin-Sambrano Wellness Center (more info on next page), while Proposition D proposed the renovation and modernization of the County Coliseum, and failed by about 700 votes of about 223,000 votes cast (less than .5 percent of the vote).

Financial Impact

The approved \$155 million bond is estimated to cost taxpayers approximately \$29 per year, or \$2.42 per month, for a home valued at \$200,000. For more details about the propositions, project timelines, and costs, visit the El Paso Capital Improvement Bond Program website at: Capital.EPCounty.com.

The County Coliseum: Looking Ahead

Despite the failure of Proposition D, the El Paso County Coliseum continues to serve as a vibrant venue for concerts, sporting events, markets, and conventions. Commissioner Stout is exploring alternative funding options to ensure the coliseum reaches its full potential. As part of ongoing improvements, a new marquee will be installed in the coming months to draw greater attention to the venue. The El Paso Sports Commission is actively seeking sponsorships to fund the marquee, aiming to minimize or eliminate costs to the county and taxpayers through private funding.



All Commissioners Court and other County public meetings are recorded and available for viewing online at epcounty.primegov.com/public/portal. Stay engaged to learn more about how these projects are advancing and how you can participate in shaping El Paso County’s future.

ASCARATE LAKE

Although funding for the project to improve Ascarate Lake was not part of the bond package, it is a project the County has been working on to make further improvements to the park. El Paso County staff are expected to come to Commissioners Court in the near future to provide improvement options.



The property intended for the Corbin Sambrano Wellness Center operated as a sexually-oriented business and was seized by the District Attorney's office in 2014 after 10 years of litigation because of illegal activity. El Paso County District Attorney Jaime Esparza then donated the property to the County under Chapter 59 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, which requires the following uses:

1. Mental health, drug, or rehabilitation service, or
2. Services for victims or witnesses of criminal offenses or instances of abuse, or
3. The provision of training or education related to the first two.

CORBIN SAMBRANO WELLNESS CENTER

Commissioner Stout has been at the forefront of efforts to transform the former Valley Theater, once an adult-oriented establishment, into a hub for healing and community services. After being seized by the El Paso District Attorney, the property was handed over to the County in 2020 with the requirement that its future use comply with Chapter 59 regulations (mentioned above).

The Corbin Sambrano and San Juan neighborhood associations have collaborated closely with El Paso County to develop plans that reflect community input and priorities. The proposed designs feature sustainable construction methods, energy-efficient air-conditioning, and landscaping with native plants from the Chihuahuan Desert. This multi-purpose facility will provide space for diverse programs and events, ensuring it serves a broad range of community needs.

Although Proposition C, which included funding for the Corbin Sambrano Wellness Center, did not pass in the November 2024 election, progress continues. Existing funds secured by the County will facilitate the demolition phase, expected to be completed within four to eight months. Environmental analysis and design development are already underway to align the project with community needs.

Commissioner Stout is dedicated to maintaining transparency and actively engaging the community throughout the project's development. Regular updates and opportunities for public input will ensure that this initiative reflects the collective vision of those it serves.



BRIDGE OF THE AMERICAS PORT MODERNIZATION PROJECT



On September 20, 2024, the Environmental Impact Statement was released by the U.S General Services Administration (GSA) with the recommendation that the port be modernized for passenger and pedestrian traffic only. While it was originally open for a 45-day comment period, it was extended to be open until December 2nd, 2024. Once the final EIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period will be put in place, prior to a decision being announced in a Record of Decision.

Commercial transportation is not only having an effect on the neighborhoods surrounding BOTA, but also on the residents crossing. Nonetheless, Commissioner Stout remains committed to public health and removing trucks from BOTA.

The primary purpose of the BOTA modernization project is to create a smoother transition when crossing the border. The GSA recommendation allows the opportunity to reconfigure the regional approach using three other ports of entry, all of which are growing in volume as commercial activity slows at the BOTA POE; it provides new commercial opportunities, promotes the local economy of people who work, shop, and socialize on both sides of the border, and above all, incorporates public health into regional ports management.

A detailed timeline along with updates is available at the GSA website: <https://shorturl.at/xRHgx>

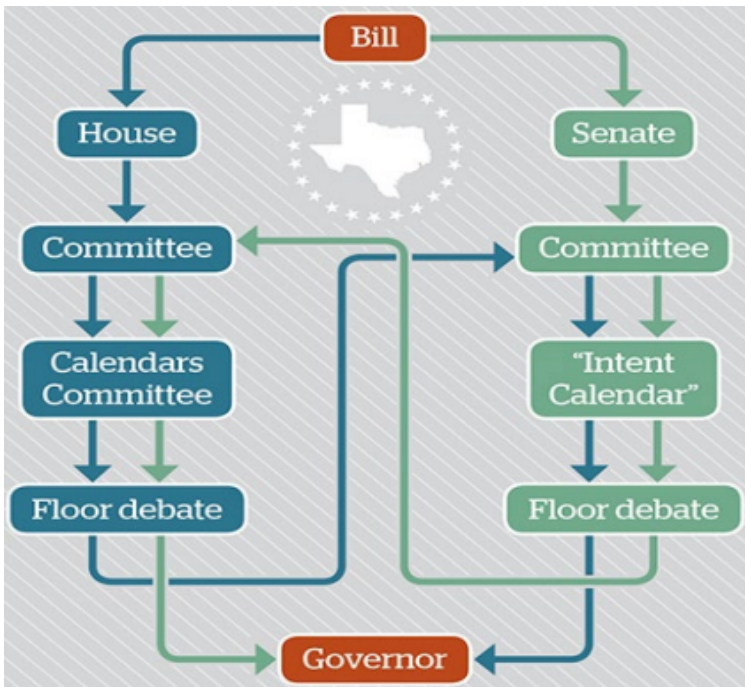
BOTA - GSA TIMELINE



89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Texas State Legislature is set to convene on January 12th, 2025 for the 89th Regular Legislative Session. The Legislature meets every two years for 140 days. This is the only time the Legislature can pass the budget and bills that are signed into law. Because of the fast-paced environment and limited time in session, only a small portion of the bills filed become law. Below, you can find how a bill becomes law, some statistics on how many bills make it through the process and dates of interest for next session. For more information, you can also visit capitol.texas.gov.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, who acts as Texas' chief tax collector, accountant, revenue estimator, treasurer and purchasing manager, reported there will be an estimated \$20 billion surplus for the next biennium 2025-2026. We expect to see the legislators appropriate these moneys to additional property tax relief. Although we would hope the Legislature would fully fund public schools with these funds, state leadership has expressed interest in appropriating moneys for school vouchers, a government-funded certificate that allows parents to use public money to pay for their child's tuition at a private school of their choice. There might also be further investing on Operation Lone Star and similar measures.



On another note, El Paso County staff has worked diligently to put together our legislative agenda, which consists of a number bill ideas to improve the level of service we provide to our community, as well as several value statements that represent what El Paso supports and opposes in a variety of issues ranging from land use, to justice and public safety, to community and economic development. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like to know more.

89TH SESSION - DATES OF INTEREST

Tuesday, November 12, 2024: legislators start pre-filing bills. A record number of 1,511 bills were filed in the House and Senate.

Tuesday, January 14, 2025: First day of session - 89th Legislature convenes at noon

Friday, March 14, 2025: 60th day of session - last day to file bills

Monday, June 2, 2025: Sine die - last day of 89th Regular Session

BILL STATISTICS

88th Regular Session

11,807 bills filed
4,500 passed
77 vetoed

86th Regular Session

10,877 bills filed
4,581 passed
58 vetoed

87th Regular Session

9,999 bills filed
3,803 passed
21 vetoed

85th Regular Session

10,672 bills filed
4,960 passed
51 vetoed

Policy priorities championed by Commissioner Stout that have recently been approved or are in process include:

- Applying \$6 million in ARPA funds for re-entry services to reduce recidivism; by working with local non-profits for re-entry services the County is able to apply this reform at a lower cost than if the County built its own facility, which was estimated to cost \$17 million.
- Approving \$\$2,257,150 and \$3,934,000 with Spectrum and AT&T respectively, in ARPA funds for broadband service in areas of the County that do not have service, or have slow unreliable service; we learned during Covid that for everyone -from students to small business owners- to access, reliable, fast Internet services is a basic need .
- Developing an Arts Commission, Arts Master Plan, and community projects in each Commissioners' precinct; this is expected to be approved in December.

RESOLUTIONS

September 9th - Recognizing September 2024 as **Suicide Prevention Awareness Month** in El Paso County, Texas. Congratulating the El Paso Figure Skating Club for a first-place victory at the ISI 2024 World Recreational Championships and for their contribution to the community. Declaring September 21, 2024, as "International Peace Day" in El Paso County.

September 16th - Honoring and recognizing **Alicia Villa** for her community advocacy and for her Jefferson Outstanding Ex this year; Recognizing Sunday, September 22, 2024, as **Lincoln Park Day** in El Paso County, Texas; Reaffirming El Paso County's commitment to being a Welcoming Community for all and inviting all residents, community organizations, and local businesses to **celebrate Welcoming Week 2024, Citizenship Day, and 16 de septiembre.**

September 23rd - Honoring the memory of **Danny McKillip** and celebrating his exceptional contributions to the sport of track and field and cross country, and on the lives of countless young students and athletes.

September 30th - Recognizing October 2024 as **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** in El Paso County.

October 7th - Declaring October 14, 2024, as **Indigenous People's Day** in El Paso County, Texas.

October 21st - Recognizing October 25, 2024, as **National Fine Art Appreciation Day** in El Paso County, Texas.

October 28th - Declaring October 31 through February 2 each year as "**Official Tamale Season**" in El Paso County to pay tribute to all tamale makers and tamale eaters.

November 4th - Declaring the month of November as **Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities Month.**

November 25th - Recognizing research performed by UTEP graduate student **Tayia Odonetto**, who won first place in the NFS Engineering Research Centers Perfect Pitch Competition for her work converting salt water into fresh water; Recognizing **Creative Kids** for 25 years of work to teach, to heal, and to produce healthier, happier, and more creative kids in El Paso del Norte.



IN THE COMMUNITY

TRICK OR TREAT AT THE COURTHOUSE



Several Departments from El Paso County participated on Halloween to give out candy to trick or treaters including the Precinct 2 office. It was incredible to see the amount of children from the community that visited the courthouse wearing all kinds of amazing costumes.

STATE OF THE COUNTY



In November, El Paso County along with the El Paso Chamber, hosted the State of the County where Judge Samaniego had the opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of the County in the last year. The Judge and county staff also thanked Commissioner Leon for all his years of service to our community and wished him a happy retirement.



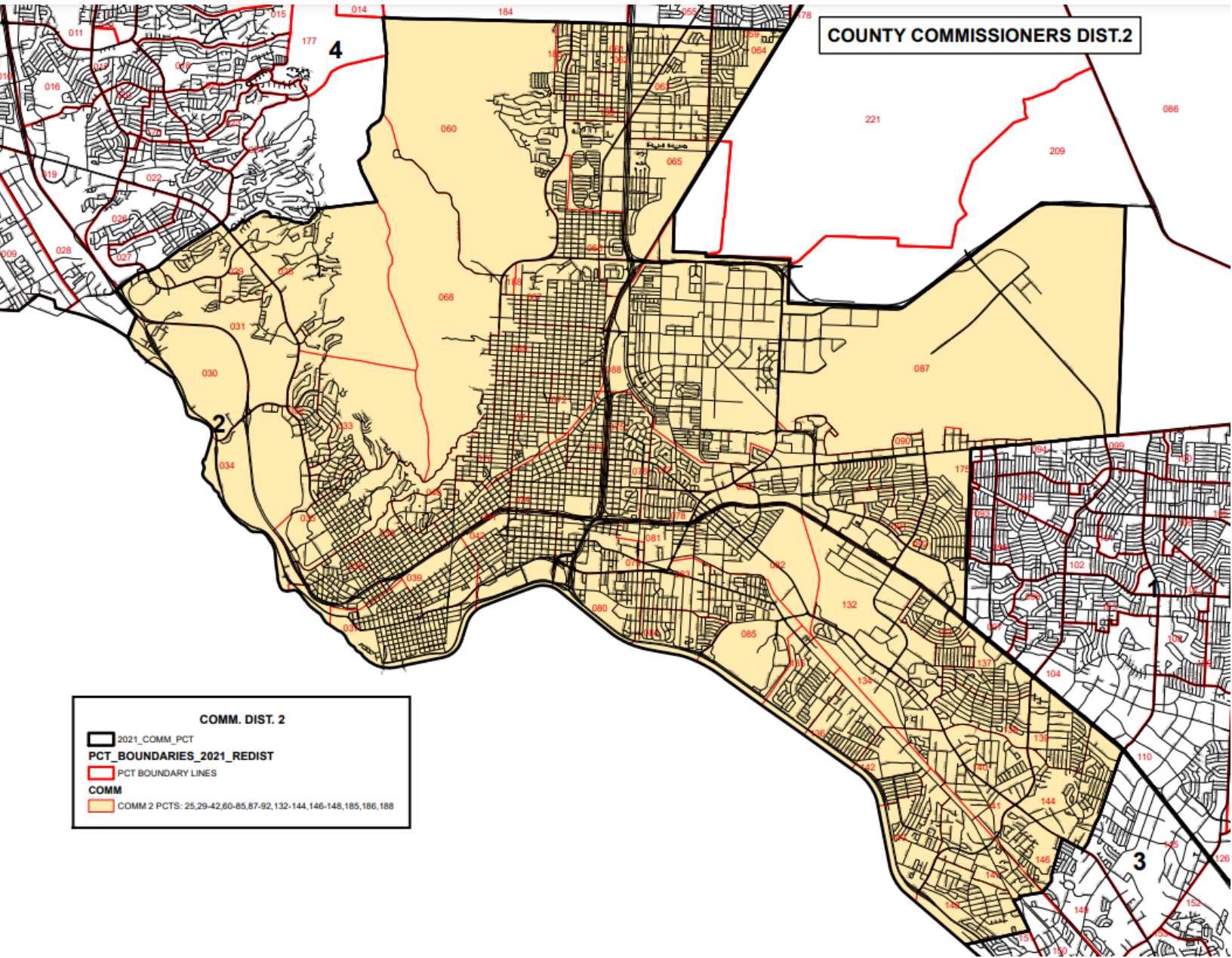
LIGHTS ON THE LAKE

Join El Paso County for a festive drive-thru light show at Ascarate Park from **December 7, 2024, to January 6, 2025** from 6 - 10pm.

- This year there will be three special events:
- Opening Ceremony – Saturday, December 7**
- Winter Posada – Saturday, December 14**
- Cookies with Santa – Saturday, December 21**

Each event will take place from **5pm -10pm** and will feature a light show, food trucks, and live music.

PRECINCT 2 MAP



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