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PARKER RELEASES AUDIT LETTER

Letters had been previously withheld from City Council— Jayme Fraser, Houston Chronicle

Amid questions from City Council members about the propriety of keeping them secret, the mayor's office on Wednesday released audit letters detailing weaknesses in the city's financial accounting. The city controller's office had refused to release the letters after a Texas attorney general opinion that the city did not have to make them public. City Controller Ronald Green declined comment on the letters or their release Wednesday.

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SOLVES ALGEBRA II PROBLEM

Stats, Algebraic Reasoning heralded— Kate Alexander, Austin American-Statesman

The State Board of Education members on Thursday solved the math equation that had long confounded them as they finalized the details of Texas' new high school graduation requirements.

In a 15-0 vote, the board gave preliminary approval to a proposal that gives students two more higher-level math options beyond Algebra 2. That course has dominated the discussion as the board has hammered out the finer points of implementing House Bill 5, the Legislature's overhaul aimed at giving students more flexibility in their course-loads.

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CORNYN FIRES BACK AT ALAMEEL FOLLOWING COMMENTS

Dem had wanted "refund"— Todd J. Gillman, The Dallas Morning News

Dallas dentist and investor David Alameel has given generously to candidates in both parties over the years. Now that he's running for the U.S. Senate as a Democrat, he's come to regret some of the donations – for instance, the ones to Sen. John Cornyn, the GOP incumbent.

"I want a refund right now because I believe John Cornyn and his Republican friends in Washington work for Wall Street and not Texans," Alameel told Texas Tribune earlier this week. On Thursday, Cornyn told him to buzz off.

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HARRIS COUNTY FLIRTS WITH SUING APPRAISAL DISTRICT

Claims HCAD undervalues—[Kiah Collier, Houston Chronicle](#)

Worried about the erosion of the tax base, county officials said Wednesday that they may consider suing the Harris County Appraisal District over concerns it is undervaluing certain business properties at the expense of homeowners.

Officials said HCAD's Appraisal Review Board in recent years has agreed to set values for commercial and industrial properties that are far below what those properties later sell for, suggesting the independently governed agency did not adequately fight property owners who challenged their appraisals in court. Commissioners Court on Wednesday took the unprecedented step of agreeing to hire independent appraisers to double-check HCAD's valuations of business properties.

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DEBRA MEDINA'S LONGSHOT BID FOR COMPTROLLER WOWS

TribLive includes talk of money—[Robert T. Garrett, The Dallas Morning News](#)

Debra Medina says she may have less than a nickel for every dollar in campaign cash amassed by her two main GOP opponents for the job of state comptroller. But never fear, she says: A rising fervor among staunchly conservative Republicans for change at the Texas Capitol will carry her to victory in the March 4 primary.

"The people of Texas are ready for someone who isn't beholden," Medina said at an event sponsored by Texas Tribune on Thursday. In her recent answers posted on a Dallas Morning News Voter Guide, Medina blasted current state leaders.

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SEN. VAN DE PUTTE ENDORSES ALAMEEL, PRAISES RECORD

Dem candidate for Lieutenant Governor gives nod—[Aman Batheja, Texas Weekly](#)

State Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, a Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, on Thursday endorsed David Alameel for the U.S. Senate seat currently held by Republican John Cornyn.

"I am proud to endorse David Alameel not only because he's the only Democrat who can beat John Cornyn, but because he will fight to hold Wall Street accountable, ensure a quality education for all Texas children and protect Social Security and Medicare," Van de Putte, of San Antonio, said in a statement released by the Alameel campaign. She also praised Alameel's military service and commitment to immigration reform.

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JOHN CULBERSON CLAIMS TO HAVE KILLED RICHMOND RAIL

Alleged budget amendment bars Fed support—[Shelby Hodge, CultureMap](#)

Residents and business owners along Richmond Avenue are breathing a sigh of relief — at least for now — as U.S. Rep. John Culberson has had his way, quashing federal funding for light-rail along Richmond, west of Shepherd, and on Post Oak Boulevard north of Richmond. Rail proponents on the other hand will be disappointed to hear that Culberson succeeded in getting the key amendment tacked onto the transportation leg of the \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill recently passed by the Senate.

"I'm very proud to have been able to protect Richmond and Post Oak from being destroyed as Fannin and Main Street were destroyed," Culberson told CultureMap following a fundraising luncheon at Tony's, which not so coincidentally is located on Richmond.

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THE DAMNED THIRD PAGE

^{new}
The Houston Post

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS MORE MONEY

We need more treatment—Bill King, Houston Chronicle

The Houston New Post is an exclusive service of Oddly, as we have come to better understand mental illness over the last several decades, there has been a *Texpatriate* (www.texpate.com). We strive to bring corresponding reduction in our investment to deal with it. Nationally, between 1955 and 2005, the number of you the biggest news, from around the State, every psychiatric hospital beds plummeted from 558,000 to just 53,000, according to the Treatment Advocacy Center, a nonprofit that studies mental illness. Articles are property of the individual author and publication, not of the Post. Any opinions expressed are similarly those of only the author. The U.S. population, meanwhile, grew dramatically during that time, reducing the number of beds available while *Texpatriate* will offer editorials and per capita from 340 per 100,000 individuals down to 17. Recently, another study found that the number of endorsements, the Post will never take sides in and beds per capita in 2010 had fallen again to about 14. As bad as the national situation is, in our region it is ongoing dispute or take political positions. even worse.

Presented by: *Sophia Arena, Olivia Arena, George Bailey, Luis Fayad, Noah M. Horwitz and Andrew Scott Romo* After a psychiatric hospital closed last year due to a lack of funds, local mental health officials estimated that we are now down to just two beds per 100,000 people.
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BEST OF THE BLOGS!

BIG JOLLY POLITICS

[“Did Rep. Riddle violate the law”](#)

BRAINS & EGGS

[“More on Battleground Texas”](#)

BURNT ORANGE REPORT

[“Dishonorable Mentions”](#)

DOS CENTAVOS

[“The war on women”](#)

EYE ON WILLIAMSON

[“Lt Governor debate, SOTU”](#)

OFF THE KUFF

[“Who killed the electric train?
John did.”](#)

RHYMES WITH RIGHT

[“Bar admission absurdity”](#)

TEXPATRIATE

[“Gov. primary endorsement”](#)

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Upper limit of 200 words, all submissions will be published!

THE EDITOR'S RANT

Noah M. Horwitz

Congratulations, Texas Dems, as you have your first victory of 2014. A super-Democratic district, the type where the yuppie Democrats vote at shockingly high rates, has remained in your hands. This should not really be news, and I personally could never understand why the race attracted so much of the limited budget Texas Democrats always complain about. Oh well.

The real news happened back in November, and was solidified last evening. The liberals are in the driver's seat, and the leftward lurch of the Democratic Party has come to Texas. By defeating the far more centrist and business-friendly Rico Reyes, State Rep-elect Celia Israel has set herself apart from both her predecessor and the conventional wisdom of what the Texas Democrats have to do to win, or so they have always been led to believe. After all, Ted Cruz did not do any worse because of his extreme conservatism.

The issue that really stuck out was that of a State Income Tax. Call me old fashioned, but I had truly thought that issue was settled before I was born, when Ann Richards and Bob Bullock had some pretty nasty fights over the topic. Thus, when Israel announced her support for the tax on the campaign trail, it was a dog whistle to left-wing interest groups, and probably had something to do with her success. Reyes was quick to repudiate the comments, and the tussle even caught the eye of Wendy Davis, who had to declare unequivocally that she opposed such a tax.

Make no mistake, this is the Democratic Party going to the left. Agree with her or not on the merits, but that's what is happening.