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Dear Client:

**Now that Texas law allows concealed weapons to be carried in some of the buildings on college campuses, including UT Austin, how will the law be implemented? It won't happen during the upcoming school year that starts this fall, 2015. Officials have until August 1, 2016 to come up with a plan. Does that date ring a bell? It is 50 years to the day that the first US campus mass shooting took place. That's when Charles Whitman climbed to the top of the UT Austin Tower to carry out a murderous rampage. It was the first of its kind but has been replicated frequently throughout the last half-century. How symbolic (ironic?) is that date!**

There will be opportunity in the coming year to delve into the symbolism/irony of that heinous crime as it relates to the time when it will become legal to carry guns on campus. For now, let's examine what is likely to take place as **rules are designed to fit the newly-passed law.**

Several things to understand. As is true in the current law, a person who will be granted a license to carry a gun must pass a **background check and be 21 years old.** The new law allowing for *openly* carrying a gun specifically **precludes open carry on a college campus. Each campus will establish its own rules and regs,** within the parameters of the new law, by 8/1/16.

The law anticipates there will be certain campus facilities that will restrict guns. Which ones? UT System Chancellor **Bill McRaven** points out "the bill anticipates that we may **limit handguns in our dormitories and other student housing** and provide storage in these buildings for students' weapons." Where else?

"We also know that **laboratories at many of our institutions conduct life-saving research dealing with dangerous viruses and other select agents,** and these may be places where as a matter of policy we **restrict concealed weapons,**" added Chancellor McRaven.

When implemented next year, what will all this look like? "**We will not create an environment where signs, metal detectors, storage facilities and additional police are so pervasive that our institutions feel like a military base rather than a university campus or teaching hospital,**" McRaven promised. (Whatever is put in place, you can bet the news media will link the plans inextricably to the Whitman/Tower massacre. In fact, we have already been interviewed by one major TV production that will air near the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016.)

**The City of Austin is off-and-running with hearings and planning that could end up with another increase in your electric bill. Austin Energy (AE) calls it a “Cost of Service Study to determine the revenue needed to operate the regional electric utility.” At this time, AE doesn’t say rates will increase, but it talks about a restructuring for possible implementation in fall 2016. The topics for study offer some interesting insight.**

The Austin City Council mandated a Cost of Service Study be conducted every five years. AE says it helps the City Council **determine revenue requirements and how the different types of customers will pay for them.** Obviously, it will be a while before the specific rate impact is known, but it’s instructive to check the Study’s parameters.

For instance, these goals are still in place: close the Decker Creek Power Station ... add 950 megawatts of solar power ... **end the use of coal power from the Fayette Power Project in La Grange** ... and deliver 55% of its electricity from renewable energy.

**Ending reliance on the Fayette coal-fired power project is dicey at best.** First of all, **Austin co-owns the facility with the Lower Colorado River Authority.** Secondly, the cost of electricity from the plant is lower than from renewable resources. And, thirdly, just this week the federal Environmental Protection Agency had its stringent coal-fired standards trimmed back by the Supreme Court, as the Fayette Project was implementing newer controls.

Another problem: **Currently there are no funds – zero, nada, none – set aside to decommission the Decker Creek Power Station.** These examples indicate the minefield of problems that must be addressed during this Cost of Service Study.

**Looking over AE’s shoulder throughout this process will be the Texas Legislature. Some say Austin Energy dodged a bullet during this past legislative session.** Serious efforts – led by Senate and House members whose districts included AE’s service area – were aimed at **wresting management control away from the City of Austin.** The efforts came to naught – but with a warning to “shape up or ship out” if AE didn’t address lawmakers’ concerns.

**Interestingly, the city’s reliance on nuclear power for a portion of its electricity was not mentioned in the announcement of the study.** For decades, the South Texas (nuclear) Project, located in Matagorda County and partially (16%) owned by Austin, has been controversial. But it keeps cranking out cheap electricity for Austin Energy customers.

**How long before the anti-nukers raise their heads?** Maybe in anticipation of such a move, a full-page, full-color ad ran this week in the *Austin American-Statesman* touting nuclear power. **It urged readers to “join us on Facebook” and was “signed” by [www.nuclearmatters.com](http://www.nuclearmatters.com).** At any rate, the work of the Austin’s Cost of Service Study bears watching.

**Speaking of utilities, have you checked your water bill lately? Of course with all the rain, you haven't had much need to throw water on your landscape – yet. But the normally-driest months are upon us. The 2015 water rates are higher than 2014. Here's what to expect.**

The water rates charged by the City of Austin's utility, Austin Water, are set up on a sliding scale from a monthly usage of 1,000 gallons to 50,000 gallons. **Generally, the more water you use, the higher the rate they charge you (with some variations).**

Let's use 15,000 gallons a month as an example. **That amount of water usage in 2015 results in a 25.6% higher rate that you paid in 2014.** A few rate increases on the bottom of the scale are in the single digits. But as you use more water than 15,000 gallons a month, the rate goes up dramatically – one, as high as 31.1%

Of course, **Austin Water continues to urge conservation.** It suggests your 2015 bill would be lower than your 2014 rate, if you cut your water usage back to 11,000 gallons a month. By the way, you actually pay more than just the per-gallon rate. Water bills include a **monthly minimum charge, tiered fixed fee, volumetric charges and what they call a "revenue stability reserve fund surcharge."** If you need more info, go to [www.AustinWater.org](http://www.AustinWater.org).

**Heads up! If you travel through the Austin airport this month you will need to elbow your way through more than a million passengers that will break all records during the traditional heaviest air travel month of the year. Getting to the terminal is tricky due to roadway construction and expansion projects on airport grounds. Ticketing and security lines will be longer than normal. Pack a lot of patience.**

July will mark the fourth million-passenger month in airport history. And it will break the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) May 2015 record of 1,022,363. It will also be the sixth monthly record to be broken in the past 15 months. What's going on?

The Austin area's population growth plays a big part. **It's not a recent phenomenon: since January 2010 the tally has skyrocketed from 8.6 million passengers a year to 10.7 million in 2014.** And the airlines are taking advantage of the burgeoning market.

**Air carriers are bringing in larger aircraft and/or adding more flights to existing destinations.** The airlines adding expanded service at ABIA include Air Canada ... Texas Sky ... Branson Air Express ... Southwest Airlines ... Allegiant ... American Airlines ... Frontier ... Virgin America and Alaska Air.

To aid your planning, **ABIA's peak travel times are 5am to 8am, 11am to 1pm and 3pm to 5:30 pm.** As always, airport officials suggest arriving at least 90 minutes prior to departure.

**What's happening at the *Austin American-Statesman*? The print version of Austin's only daily newspaper not only has fewer pages and fewer ads, it has fewer readers. Now, due to changes planned for next week, it may lose even more readers.**

As previously announced, beginning the week of July 6, the printed paper will no longer be printed in Austin. The bulk of the paper will be printed in San Antonio, with certain sections printed in Houston. This is part of a major cost-cutting move. As editor **Debbie Hiott** told subscribers: **“Outsourcing printing will give us better control over our costs, especially as our print-only audience shrinks.”** So, what is the effect for print-only readers? Substantial.

The *Statesman* has committed to its readers that **“subscribers will still get the paper at the same time every morning.”** And therein lies a problem. Your newspaper must travel roughly 90-miles up IH35 from the new presses. Then your carrier will take it to your address. **This means print deadlines will be earlier.** The net effect of these early deadlines: **late-breaking news developments will not be in the morning paper.** For instance, print readers will not know the results of late-running Austin City Council and other meetings.

But sports devotees will be hit the hardest. **The results of the Texas Longhorn football opener against Notre Dame will not be final by the new early deadline.** Ditto other night-time football All-Star and Bowl Games and basketball games. The *Sunday* newspaper edition will be the first time print subscribers can learn the final scores of *Friday Night* high school football games. Get the picture?

The printed version of the paper is likely to lose more readers as a result. But. As with most other major newspapers around the nation, **the *Statesman* will beef up its online presence where you can get almost-immediate news/sports developments.** And the *Statesman*, despite layoffs, still has the largest news/sports staffs in Central Texas. Also, the *Statesman*'s emphasis on award-winning in-depth investigations should continue to make the print paper stand out.

**Dr. Louis Overholster** spotted this headline blooper: “War Dims Hope for Peace.” (Ya think?)

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher