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Dear Client:

**It hasn't come close to peaking yet, but a coupla races for Congress in Central Texas will soon start coming into focus in the public eye. It's only a handful because the next election is a runoff. It will be held May 22<sup>nd</sup>. This will determine the Dem vs GOP contests to ultimately select the final winner in the General Election contest in November.**

The most wide-open runoff race will be for the District 21 Congressional seat that extends from parts of Austin to parts of San Antonio. **Lamar Smith** decided not to run for reelection. One reason was, under House rules, he is term-limited and **would not be able to keep his powerful committee chairmanship even if he were re-elected**. So what does the race to replace him look like now that the Dems and GOPers both have runoffs to select their party nominee?

First the Democrats. Two candidates will be on the May 22<sup>nd</sup> ballot – **Joseph Kopsler** and **Mary Street Wilson**. They emerged from a crowded field, but neither, obviously, got 50+% of the vote to avoid a runoff.

The same is true for the Republicans. **Matt McCall** and **Chip Roy** will be going head-to-head for the GOP nomination. The primary contest was notable in that USenator **Ted Cruz** went all-in for Roy, his former chief of staff.

Two Democrats will be scrambling for the opportunity to challenge District 10 Congressman **Michael McCaul**, who is the high profile chair of the USHouse Homeland Security Committee. They are **Mike Siegel** and **Tawana Walter-Cadien**. This district includes all of Austin, and runs east through several conservative counties to the edge of Houston.

Another congressional district race, that encompasses a portion of Austin and runs all the way north to the edge of Fort Worth, has two Democrats vying for the chance to challenge incumbent **Roger Williams**. **Julie Oliver** and **Chris Perri** emerged from a crowded field of Dems to make the runoff.

**These are the only Congressional runoffs in Central Texas.** But, there are others in Texas that bear watching if you're interested in the balance between Democrats and Republicans in the USHouse, that is now heavily Republican. Of particular note is District 23, which the Dems have targeted nationally. They want to oust GOP **Will Hurd**, an African American in heavily Hispanic West Texas, where **Gina Ortiz Jones** is facing **Rick Trevino** in a runoff. Stay tuned.

**Is the City of Austin about to embark on public-private partnerships with *businesses* to help fund the upkeep of city parks? Remember, this is a city where some of its left-leaning vocal residents think for-profit ventures are the work of the devil, or some other form of suspect entity. To be sure, the city's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is also exploring partnerships with neighborhood and community groups, as well as nonprofit organizations. But businesses?**

Parkland in Austin is a big undertaking. Think about this: **PARD oversees 300 parks, 227 miles of trails, 16 greenbelts and 15 preserves.** Austinites and visitors love this parkland, sometimes too much, if usage is a measure. And, this usage is growing rapidly as the population of outdoors-loving Austinites (and visitors) increases.

It takes a lot to maintain all this parkland. **For instance PARD cleans up more than 150 pounds of dog doo-doo each year,** not to mention trying to protect and preserve the natural attractions after thousands of human beings have left their mark. PARD indicates city funds are not adequate to the task. So, what to do?

This week, PARD said it is *cautiously* exploring getting some level of additional funding by entering into public-private partnerships. We said *cautiously* because PARD's acting director, **Kimberly McNeeley** was quoted this way in the *Austin Monitor* this week as saying:

“‘In Austin right now we have a lot of opinions along the spectrum about how folks feel about public-private partnerships,’ she said. She explained that the department is going to have to work to **earn the confidence of citizens who are wary of for-profit partnerships with Austin's public parks.**”

Wary of for-profit partnerships? Even a cursory example will turn up a vast number of businesses in Austin that have been contributing for years to make the city a better place. **In fact, you have to look no further than H-E-B to see the massive support the grocer has provided to Austin area teachers and education,** in addition to the many other ways it gives back to the community.

Examples abound for similar business contributions of money and resources that have been made for the public good in the Capital City. **Just because a business makes a profit doesn't automatically mean it has ulterior motives that may do harm.**

This is not to downplay the numerous volunteers who spend countless hours devoting time to non-profit organizations. They can be valuable partners for PARD in a partnership role. But, **the city is missing a big bet if it doesn't tap good-hearted businesses whose employees live and play here as well.** If nothing else, Austin can look to left-leaning models of San Francisco and New York City that have made the leap to public-private partnerships with businesses.

**Want another business indicator of Austin’s fast-moving population? A Houston company is investing \$125 million to open ten self-storage facilities all over the area. Total square footage that will become available this year: 1.2 million.**

Two locations are opening right now, **ATX Storage** at 6901 No IH35 ... and **Lakeline Storage** at 11000 Lakeline Blvd. The others coming online this year: **Bee Cave Storage ... Manchaca Storage ... Oak Hill Storage ... Bergstrom Storage ... Northgate Storage** and **Darden Hill Storage**. **West Highway 29 Storage Georgetown** and **Leander Storage** are expansions of current facilities. Houston-based **Jenkins Organization** is making this happen.

**Speaking of space. You know all those office towers under construction? Well, they are being pre-leased at one of the fastest rates in the nation. CBRE Group reports that about 53% of the square footage slated to come online between now and 2022 is already pre-leased – a rate higher than Dallas, San Jose or Denver.**

**Your Texas Legislature meets for only 140 days every two years. Some state legislatures meet damn-near year ’round. But in Texas, the old saying is that “if they ain’t meetin’, they ain’t hurtin’ ya.” This year, 2018, is one of those “ain’t meetin’” years, unless the Governor calls a rare Special Session to address some sort of crisis. So, why do you see State Senators and Representatives wandering around the halls of the Capitol Building these days?**

The answer to this question is where you can insert snarky comments like “looking for a free meal/drinks from lobbyists,” “need to rack up some per-diem income” or “need to get away from constituents back home,” etc. Some of those snarky comments may have the ring of truth for some legislators. **The official, and real, answer is that work is being done, usually through interim committees – getting ready for the next 86<sup>th</sup> regular biennial session starting in Austin on January 8, 2019.**

In a state the size and complexity of Texas, it is a big job to examine, address and act on a wide variety of issues in just 140 days. **Interim committees, under the guidance of the House Speaker and the Lt. Gov., collect data, hear testimony, and make recommendations for legislation to be considered in January.** It makes for a more efficient operation.

This doesn’t mean controversial issues (such as last session’s gender-specific bathroom bill) will go away. On the contrary. **But, legally, the only measure required is a spending bill for the next two years starting in the fall of 2019.** The work at the Statehouse during the interim should help focus the agenda for the regular session. And, you can bet the GOP-controlled legislature will have a number of Austin-bashing measures on that agenda. Stay tuned.

**With Democrats and Republicans seemingly more at odds than ever, it's timely that attorney Bill King, a close runner-up in the recent race for Mayor of Houston, shared his perspective on this nation's two-party system. He points out the two-party system has no constitutional roots. And, in fact, some of the Founding Fathers warned against the two-party concept. Should we have listened to them?**

King points out **nearly a third of George Washington's Farewell Address is devoted to warning his new country about the dangers of political parties.** Washington encouraged his fellow citizens to never allow political parties to gain control of the government. In the flowery language of his time, here's part of what he wrote:

**"It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption ... A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into flame ..."**

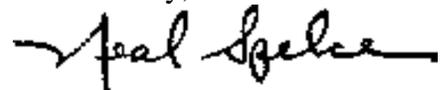
Here's what **John Adams** wrote in 1780 in a letter to **Johnathan Jackson**:  
**"There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and concerting measure in opposition to each other. This in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution."**

**Thomas Jefferson** wrote this clincher in 1789: **"If I could not go to heaven but with a political party, I would decline to go."**

Strong opinions. From others as well. **They are all probably rolling over in their graves, watching what is going on today.** Our thanks to Bill King for this research.

Speaking of Dem/GOP combatants, **Dr. Louis Overholster** told us about a poetic response from an Arizona Democrat when he lost a mayor's race to a Republican: "The election is now over ... Let all this bitterness pass ... I will hug your elephant and ... You can kiss my – donkey!"

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher