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Dear Client:

Mayor Lee Leffingwell says Austin has one of the nation's fastest growing populations of people older than 55. The "oldest" American city is in Florida where the median age is 61.4 and the "youngest" is in Idaho with a median age of 23.3. What is Austin's median age?

In his annual state of the city address, Mayor Leffingwell said he is committed to finding \$50,000 to pay for a task force to **address the needs of this fastest-growing aging population**. "We must take our work to a new level to be certain that our seniors can continue to live active, healthy and independent lives," he said.

Austin has long been touted as a "youthful" city. So what is the median age of this city that has one of the nation's fastest-growing 55+ population? American City Business Journals, through its project called *On Numbers*, ran the numbers to determine the median age of 942 metro areas in the US.

Austin ranked #829, clocking in with a 32.3 median age, which is still among the youngest in the nation. The median for the entire country is 36.9 years. For further comparison purposes: the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metro area's median age is 33.3 years of age, ranking #799 and Houston's media age is 32.9.

Incidentally, the most "mature" area in Texas is nearby Fredericksburg with a median age of 49.3 years. Closer to Austin, Marble Falls' median age is 43. The "youngest" Texas metro area is College Station-Bryan at 25.4, due to its high percentage of college students.

Speaking of college students, **how many students do you think are enrolled in the Austin metro's colleges and universities? If you estimated more than 140,000 go to the front of the class.** This is the tally of the seven biggest higher education institutions in the area. (While this is a big number, it is a much smaller percentage of the whole, so the Bryan-College Station area's median age is impacted more heavily.)

Here's the fall 2011 enrollment breakout for the "Big Seven": **UTAustin**, 51,112 ... **Austin Community College**, 45,100 ... **Texas State University**, San Marcos, 34,087 ... **St. Edward's University**, 5,330 ... **Concordia University**, 2,658 ... **Southwestern University**, Georgetown, 1,347 ... and **Huston-Tillotson University**, 904.

“Mexico is a friend, not an enemy.” Among the threats to our nation’s security, violence in and from Mexico is simply not a specific threat to the US, writes Texan Tony Garza, a George W. Bush appointee as US Ambassador to Mexico. But he made no reference to the drug trafficking from Mexico to Texas and elsewhere.

Ambassador Garza is an expert on Mexico. **After his diplomatic posting to Mexico City, he remained as a resident of Mexico, married to one of that country’s wealthiest women.** Following the breakup of his marriage, he is in private practice in Mexico City, representing clients who do business in and with Mexico.

“Breaking through the noise of election-year rhetoric on both sides of the border is essential if we are to gain a more complete understanding of the situation on the ground in Mexico,” noted Garza. Mexico is also electing a president this year.

“New travel warnings for Americans in Mexico issued in recent weeks by the US State Department and **rhetoric over the drug war** among candidates for president in Mexico last month surely make one wonder if there is a path forward for the United States and Mexico to achieve security and to generate greater prosperity for both nations,” he said.

“That’s not to say we cannot, nor should not, be deeply engaged and concerned about Mexico’s ability to confront and triumph over the violence waged by warring drug cartels,” he continued. “It would be welcome news to see presidential contenders on both sides of the border raise the issue in a constructive manner, though **in an election year, that hope is likely dim.**”

Garza reported that **“it’s an undisputed fact that most of the violence and killings in Mexico are trafficker-on-trafficker.”** And he said that more than half of the traffickers on Mexico’s most wanted list have been captured or killed. But Garza did *not* make any reference to **Mexico’s drug cartels that are linked to gangs and traffickers in Austin** and other Texas cities, as we have previously reported.

Garza’s position is understandable. He knows and understands Mexico. And he can help a lot of clients in their efforts in Mexico. His livelihood depends upon good relations between the US and Mexico. **In his own way, the former ambassador may help foster better relations.**

How much did the 2011 drought cost the Texas economy? Hang on. According to one estimate, it dried up a record-setting \$7.62 billion in the agricultural sector.

The loss breakdown: **livestock** (\$3.23 billion), **cotton** (\$2.2 billion), **lost hay production** (\$750 million) and **corn** (\$736 million), according to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

So, which local business categories received the most complaints from consumers in 2011, according to records at the Better Business Bureau (BBB) serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin?

The Austin area BBB has grown tremendously under the leadership of President/CEO **Carrie Hurt**. It now serves consumers spanning 79 counties in Texas. **And it is recognized as one of the most influential BBBs in North America.** The efforts of the BBB staff have rendered **record-breaking results at both the local and national levels.** (Personal disclosure: back in the Dark Ages, your editor/publisher was privileged to serve as the volunteer chair of the BBB – long before it reached this level of recognition.)

One of the roles of the BBB is to take complaints from consumers about various businesses and try to resolve those complaints. **Which industry groups received the most complaints in 2011 in the 79 BBB counties?** The top two categories: **#1 Prepaid Debit/Credit cards** (404 complaints) and **#2 Auto Dealers – New Cars** (403 complaints), ran neck-and-neck.

Next in line: **#3 Apartments** (385 complaints), **#4 Consumer Finance & Loan Companies** (316), **#5 Furniture – Retail** (303), **#6 Insurance Companies** (301), **#7 Auto Dealers – Used Cars** (297), **#8 Auto Repair & Service** (287), **#9 Computers – Service & Repair** (200) and **#10 Billing Service** (174).

The BBB headquartered here in Austin covers 79 counties through its five offices in Austin, Corpus Christi, Harker Heights, Midland and San Antonio. And, it boasts **more than 10,000 accredited business locations in seven media markets.**

Calendar update: The Formula One Austin organizers have until 6/1/12 to present its final plans to the Travis County Commissioners Court for approvals. The deadline includes plans for road closures, mass gathering permits, traffic management and emergency services.

Now, here's a city tax abatement that many can get behind. After all, who doesn't like Blue Bell ice cream?

Brenham's City Council unanimously approved a city property tax abatement for Blue Bell Creameries' \$13 million expansion project. The expansion will double the ice cream makers' storage capacity. Don't know about you, but maybe this will allow Blue Bell to make more widely available its Peppermint Ice Cream that it produces only at Christmas time. Yummmmm! Or, at least, make enough Peppermint Ice Cream that it doesn't run out during the holiday period. Talk about getting your priorities straight!

What if you could fly between two points that today takes about 20 hours – in five hours? You can do this, if you have the big bucks, in just a few years.

Private supersonic jets, built to carry 10 to 20 people, may be rolled out by mid-decade. These puppies can zoom. **They'll go from Mach 1 – about 700 miles an hour – over land, and then when they get over oceans, the pilots can kick it up to more than 1,000 miles an hour.** (Noise limits force it to fly slower over land.) This is a little less than the Concorde aircraft that several air carriers tried to make commercially viable, before abandoning the plane.

According to one example, the aircraft can **fly from Washington DC to Sydney Australia in five hours – a trip that now takes about 20 hours.** One plane is being manufactured in the US, another is in the United Kingdom.

Supersonic air travel will not come cheap, though, according to our friends at *Kiplinger*. If you have to ask, you can't afford it. So, we had to ask. **Each plane is projected to cost between \$75 million and \$100 million,** plus maintenance, crew, etc. We understand some orders have already come in from wealthy Arab sheiks. (Is the phrase "wealthy Arab sheiks" redundant?)

Aerion Corp of Nevada and HyperMach, based in the UK, are two of the manufacturers.

Back to more mundane travel, the Top 50 annual U-Haul study of movers has been released and, once again, Austin is a top national magnet for relocation.

For the third year in a row, **Houston is the #1 destination, San Antonio is #5 and Austin is #6** in the 2011 statistics. Other Texas cities: **#15 Dallas, #35 Plano, and #44 Fort Worth.**

Dr. Louis Overholster says his 6-year-old SUV is worth more today than when he bought it – that is, after he fills it with gasoline!

Sincerely



Editor/Publisher