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Dear Client:

Austin software engineers are well-paid and in high demand. Tech jobs have exploded worldwide in recent years. So, where does Austin – as a widely-recognized major tech center – stand when competing with other world tech centers – especially as you examine salaries and cost of living? Quite well, thank you. Let’s do a quick analytic comparison.

To set the stage, we turn to Hired, a company that facilitates the job search process for clients, ranging from interview request all the way to the final job offer. As a result of its recent worldwide expansion, **Hired has access to salary information in 16 of the world’s biggest tech markets including, obviously, Austin.** And their analysis reveals why Austin is attracting so many tech workers from elsewhere, punching the area’s population ever higher.

For decades, Silicon Valley has been the epicenter of the tech industry, but the rise of new technology and innovation hubs across the US and the world are challenging the Bay Area’s reign. **“In fact,” noted Hired, “after adjusting for cost of living in San Francisco, cities like Austin, Melbourne, Seattle and Toronto are increasingly attractive stops for tech workers to grow their careers.”**

Hired reported the following in its 2nd edition of *Global State of Tech Salaries*: **“In Austin, the average salary for a software engineer on Hired is \$110K. But this is equivalent to making \$198K in San Francisco when you consider the cost of living difference between the two cities.** Quite a competitive edge for Austin.

And, Austin tech enterprises are aggressively taking advantage of this discrepancy. **“Notably, Austin-based companies are especially willing to relocate the right talent, with more than 60% of job offers going to candidates living outside the Lone Star State,** Hired observed. “In comparison, only 30% of offers from SF Bay Area companies are given to non-local candidates.”

Austin is not alone in this competitive advantage. It’s especially true outside the US, such as European, Canadian and Asian markets. **“Our analysis shows it’s a great time for tech workers to consider a role outside Silicon Valley,”** the company concluded. “This year’s data reveals that higher salaries await candidates who are willing to move to a new city.” Another factor to consider on the flip side is that, in many cases, **these higher salaries for relocating non-local candidates are more than those offered to local candidates.**

The Texas economic year is starting with a bang. The numbers are so impressive an economist tracking Texas trends wrote this week he has rarely in the last three decades seen such a significant stat. Let's examine what impressed Ray Perryman and what he thinks this means.

“In the more than 30 years that I have been writing this weekly epistle, I could probably **count on one hand the number of times that I have focused on a single number and have a few fingers left over,**” wrote Perryman. **“This week, I am making an exception.” He is referring to the job picture.** You'll recall we shared the impressive Austin numbers with you last week. (Click on “Archives” at the top of this page and go to the 3.17.17 edition for details.)

“The January employment numbers are out and Texas started the year off with a hiring bang. The state added 51,300 *net* new jobs, pushing the total gain for the prior 12 months to 225,300,” Perryman reported. **“Clearly, a job increase of this magnitude is good news.”**

Perryman continued writing about what impressed him: **“There have only been a few months in the past decade where job gains exceeded 50,000, so this is noteworthy indeed, and it comes after a fairly lackluster end to 2016.”** There was one month during the recent “oil boom” when Texas topped 80,000.

Looking at it from a different direction, Perryman points out **“during the worst of the oil downturn in 2015, the state gained fewer than 156,000 jobs all year, so a month with an increase of nearly a third of that amount is very positive.** It indicates the adverse effects of the oil downturn are largely behind us, **particularly given that the increases were across most segments of the economy.”**

This is quite a change in Perryman's approach to analysis: **“I have never been one to put much stock in a single monthly statistic,”** he admits. “Economic data can fluctuate for all sorts of reasons, and **it is normally best to see a pattern develop.”** So this is quite a departure for the longtime watcher of the Texas economy.

In addition to involving a variety of industries, **increases were spread across most of the state's metropolitan areas.** “Houston is still experiencing relatively sluggish growth,” he said. **But the other largest population centers are adding jobs at a notable pace (including Austin, as we told you last week.)** And Perryman said even smaller Texas metro areas had key job expansion.

What can we expect going forward, Ray? **“A job gain of January's magnitude should not be expected month after month, and we will doubtless see ups and downs in the months to come.** However, the annual rate is a solid, healthy rate. It's a signal that the state economy is gaining momentum. There are daunting long-term challenges, **but the bottom line is that things are looking very good for the state economy.”**

Speaking of the state economy, a proposed billion-dollar project is getting a lot of attention. We're talking about a massive wall along the border between the US and Mexico, most of it in Texas. What kind of attention? Would you believe more than 700 companies – including 120 based in Texas – expressed interest after the project was officially “posted.”

As President **Donald Trump** might say, this is “yuuugh.” Consider the government specs: **up to 30 feet tall and no shorter than 18 feet** ... it will also be **six feet underground** to stop tunnelers ... and it would be sturdy enough to **withstand a 30-minute barrage of pick axes, sledgehammers and blow torches.**

The *Dallas Morning News* called it a “builder’s dream.” In fact, the *News* said **prospective construction companies are just about drooling over the plan.** One Texas-based concrete company told the newspaper “the total amount of concrete will be massive.”

If you plan to be at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) Tuesday, April 4, 2017, between the hours of 8 am to noon, you will be treated to a make-believe sight you would hope you never see in real life. You should plan accordingly.

A full-scale exercise of the Airport Emergency Plan will be conducted. This is to **train emergency responders** how to realistically respond to and mitigate an aircraft incident. What is meant by full-scale? **The City of Austin is recruiting 150 volunteers** to play the role of severe-to-minor injured or distressed passengers, uninjured passengers and friends/family members of passengers who may have been on an aircraft.

By the way, volunteers are required to be onsite at 7:30 am and have availability through the afternoon. Some volunteers may be selected to receive fake injuries applied via latex or makeup. So the **scene could appear quite realistic to some unaware air travelers just stumbling upon the exercise.** This type of training is conducted at ABIA every three years.

Did you see the half-page ad in Sunday’s *Austin American-Statesman* with this headline: “Attention: Do you know anyone who has been injured or killed as a result of an accident involving a charter bus?” Yep, this ad was placed by an attorney hired by Central Texas passengers of the tragic bus accident in Mississippi earlier this month.

A Beaumont attorney, with an office in Houston, **Mitchell Toups**, is seeking others to join his lawsuit against the Echo Transportation Bus Company and the CSX Transportation Railroad. His law firm is also litigating cases against other bus companies throughout the US. You’ll recall a **charter bus carrying elderly Central Texans as they toured casinos** in the South was hit broadside by a train at an intersection. Several were killed and injured.

Veteran Republican Congressman Lamar Smith, who represents a portion of the Austin area, may be getting a Democratic opponent, one whose background does not mirror that of an “ordinary” candidate who has been rising through the political ranks. But, Joseph Kopper appears serious about jumping into politics. In fact, he’s doing a very political thing: he’s already raising money.

Smith is an influential member of Congress. Since 1986, he has made a mark in the US Congress and currently serves as the **Chair of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology – a vital committee that has importance to the Austin area.** Seldom has he had a serious opponent, even as his Austin district boundaries have changed over the years. So, a challenger like Kopper bears watching. Okay, who is this guy with little name ID?

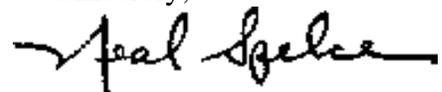
If the name doesn’t ring a bell, you may have seen him at some tech functions. **He’s the guy who seems to always wear a well-worn, burnt-orange Longhorn gimme cap,** no matter the rest of his dress. Beneath this cap, he has an interesting history and background. Currently, Kopper is president of Grayline. **He’s better known as Co-Founder and CEO of RideScout.** This company connected mobility services to app users worldwide and was recently sold to Daimler Benz.

Prior to leading RideScout, **he served in the US Army for 20 years,** earning the Combat Action Badge, Army Ranger Tab and Bronze Star. Kopper graduated from **West Point with a BS in Aerospace Engineering and received a Masters from the Harvard Kennedy School in 2002.**

What’s his beef with Cong Smith? **Kopper charges Smith with being “Congress’s most persistent climate change denier.”** If he decides to run, Kopper said his fund-raising “will help send a powerful signal that **a people-powered campaign can defeat one of the most anti-science politicians in Congress.**”

Dr. Louis Overholster doesn’t know when the Austin City Council did it, but he’s convinced the Council passed a law mandating the car in front of you drive slower than you.

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher