

Top officials are mum about possible state capitol building security improvements

AUSTIN — Security concerns ballooned on Jan. 21, after a man fired pistol shots outside the south entrance of the state Capitol building.

Fausto Cardenas, the shooter, was quickly apprehended by authorities and no one was injured in the incident.

On Jan. 28, leaders met to discuss how Capitol security might be improved.

Checkpoints and surveillance cameras were mentioned, but officials with the Texas Department of Public Safety, Gov. Rick Perry, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, House Speaker Joe Straus and others did not give deeper details after their closed-door meeting.

Visitors, employees, lawmakers and other public officials have enjoyed minimal scrutiny in their Capitol comings and goings, but the time for more stringent measures may have come.

The Texas Department of Public Safety has a force of trained officers stationed at the Capitol and the nearby Governor's Mansion.

Still fresh in mind is the June 8, 2008, fire ruled as arson, that destroyed much of the mansion, prompting worries about security.

Program to benefit many

In 2009, more than 2.3 million Texans claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit and received more than \$5.3 billion in EITC refunds, State Comptroller Susan Combs said Jan. 29.

"That's an average of \$2,313 per qualifying household, bringing financial relief to families and a boost to the Texas economy," she said.

This year, more Texas families will be able to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit because of the slow economy, Combs said.

EITC refunds are based

on family size and income. Families with three or more children and less than \$48,279 in earned income during 2009 may qualify for a tax credit up to \$5,657.

Families with two children and an earned income less than \$45,295 can claim a tax credit up to \$5,028.

Families with one child earning less than \$40,463 may qualify for a tax credit up to \$3,043. For a childless family earning less than \$18,440, a credit up to \$457 is available.

Call the Internal Revenue Service at (800) 829-1040 for details.

Unemployment rate up

Texas' seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 8.3 percent in December, up from 8 percent a month ago, the Texas Workforce Commission reported Jan. 21.

The U.S. seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December was 10 per-

cent.

In other labor news, on Jan. 25, Tom Pauken, Texas Workforce Commission chief, released new federal labor statistics showing Texas created more private sector jobs than any other state in the nation over the last 10 years and has the lowest unemployment rate among the 10 largest states in the nation.

Current Employment Statistics for December 2009 show Texas created 724,300 more net private sector jobs as compared to December 1999, the largest private sector job gain nationwide over the last decade.

Debates set for candidates

Incumbent Gov. Perry, U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Debra Medina of Wharton County, all Republican candidates for governor, have debated twice before a large broadcast audience, first on Jan. 14 and again on Jan. 29.

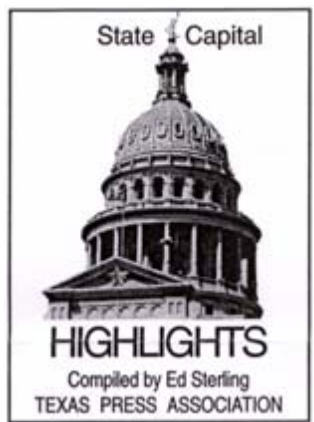
The second and final debate for the Republicans was staged at WFAA-TV, a Dallas station owned by Belo Corp. Reporters peppered the three candidates with questions on jobs, taxes, health care and transportation.

Now it's the Democratic candidates' turn. Former Houston Mayor Bill White and hair products millionaire Farouk Shami of Houston will square off in their own debate to be broadcast live on Feb. 8.

Ex-commerce chief dies

Gov. Perry directed Texas flags to be flown at half-staff at state buildings on Jan. 27 in memory of Texas businessman Robert Mosbacher Sr., U.S. Commerce Secretary from 1989 to 1992.

Mosbacher, 82, died of pancreatic cancer on Jan. 24 at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in his hometown of Houston.



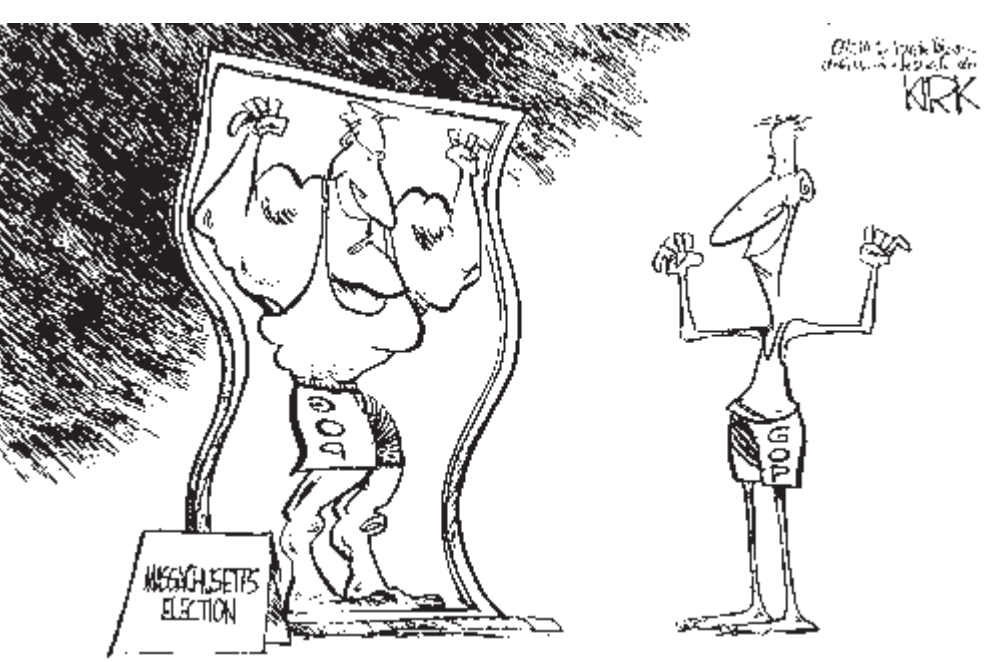
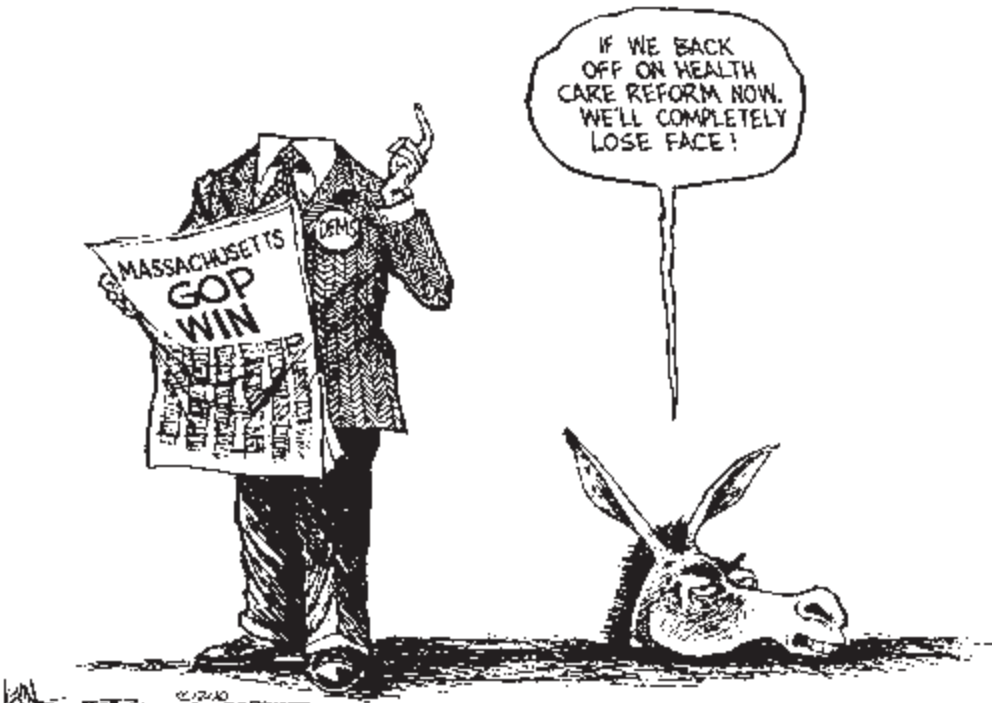
Texas near top
Forbes magazine, in a special "Global Debt Crisis" report published Jan. 20, ranked Texas as having one of the lowest debt burdens in the country compared to the other 49 states.

Texas ranked fourth overall behind Utah, New Hampshire and Nebraska. Conversely, California, Connecticut, New York and Illinois ranked 47th through 50th, respectively.

Early voting starts Feb. 16

Feb. 1 was the last day to register to vote in primary elections on Tuesday, March 2.

The first day of early voting is Feb. 16 and the last day of early voting is Feb. 26.



TEXANS SHOULD SAFELY PARTICIPATE IN 2010 U.S. CENSUS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

IN MARCH, CENSUS FORMS WILL BE delivered to every residence in the United States. Participation in the 2010 Census is crucial to Texas' future. The U.S. Constitution requires that the federal government conduct a population count every 10 years.

Demographic data obtained during the census process ultimately determines the number of seats Texas gets in the U.S. House of Representatives, so it has a major impact on Texas' representation in Washington. Additionally, this population data is used to calculate Texas' share of \$400 billion dollars in federal funding. These taxpayer dollars fund buildings, roads and services such as hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers and emergency medical care. For example, Census data determined the number of vaccines delivered to Texas cities during the H1N1 crisis.

Under federal law, Census participation is mandatory for all Texas residents, whether they are citizens or

noncitizens. Household data provided during the event is confidential. Census workers face unlawful disclosure penalties of up to five years in prison and fines up to \$250,000.

Census forms will arrive in the mail by mid-March. Recipients should complete the form and return it immediately. No official census information will be collected via e-mail, so participants should be cautious of any e-mails regarding the U.S. Census. These are fraudulent e-mails unlawfully seeking recipients' personal information.

Census workers will visit door-to-door in residential areas in order to verify certain Census information. Participants should always look for identification from Census takers before opening the door. Census Bureau employees will be clearly identified with a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag and a confidentiality notice. Census takers will visit a home

up to three times to record resident information. Every time a Census worker comes to the door, they will leave a door hanger containing a telephone number for the residents to call to schedule a visit when the resident is available.

By conducting door-to-door checks, the Census Bureau is attempting to collect correct and accurate information. The 2010 Census forms will only contain 10 questions, including name, home address and the number of people at the address. Census workers might also ask for a salary range, but participants can refuse to answer this question if they do not feel comfortable giving out that information.

Census workers might also ask for basic financial information, but they will not ask for Social Security numbers, bank account or credit card numbers nor will they ask for any type of donations. For more information about the 2010 Census, participants should visit www.census.gov/2010census/.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

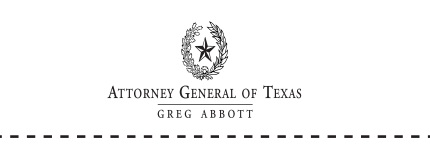


2010 U.S. CENSUS

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- Census employees will not request Social Security numbers, credit card or banking information, or donations.
- Census employees might ask for basic financial information, such as salary range. Participants may decline to provide such information.

For more information about the 2010 U.S. Census, visit: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>

For more information about this and other consumer topics, visit the attorney general's Web site at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov or call (800) 252-8011.



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