

The Official Publication of the Tax Assessor-Collectors Association of Texas

# THE COUNTY TAX STATEMENT



Volume 19, Issue 4-December 2019

## *2020 Vision*

*Preparing for the Future*





**Message from the President:  
by Cathy Talcott, Comal County  
Tax Assessor-Collector**

Hello TACA Members & Merry Christmas to You!

So many of our members have been busy these past several weeks with their re-election campaigns. At times, Christmas has almost been an afterthought, hasn't it? For those of you who have no opponent, congratulations! And for the rest of you, I wish you the very best of success!

There is another category for this year's Tax Assessor-Collectors, and that happens to be those of us who have chosen not to run again for office. 2020 will be many of our colleagues' final year as Tax Assessor-Collector. I, among many others, fall into that category. But for the remainder of my term, I plan to give my final year all the gusto I possibly can, and that includes my duties as your TACA President!

There is a reason I specifically chose this year's theme of "2020 Vision: Preparing for the Future," for we all have different futures ahead of us for which we are needing a clear vision. Your TACA Board continues to work hard to achieve the best possible vision for our TACA members.

I wish you all success in your endeavors, and a wholesome vision preparing for 2020! Merry Christmas & the Happiest of New Years to you and your family!

*Cathy*

# The County Tax \$tatement

The County Tax Statement is the official publication of the Tax Assessor-Collector's Association of Texas and is published four times each year for the benefit of its members and interested contributing parties. The purpose of the organization is to promote professional standards, to unify actions for the benefit of its constituents, to be aware and participate in the legislative process, and to provide a vehicle to educate its members in the proper conduct of the constitutional office of the Assessor-Collector of Taxes.

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## 2019-2020 TACA

### Board of Directors

**From left: Donna Willis, Director**  
**Bruce Stidham, Vice Pres Internal**  
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**Albert Uresti, Director**



# From the Editor

Billie Page, Angelina County Tax Assessor-Collector, PCAC



Merry and Blessed Christmas, Friends!

These last several months have been so **busy**, right? We rolled headlong from the formerly known as Effective Tax Rate Calculations into preparing and mailing tax statements, to VG Young Conference, to filing for re-election, deciding not to run again, to Thanksgiving and now Christmas!

Please remember those who are lonely, who won't have anyone to share the holidays with, who won't receive Christmas gifts due to financial situations or those who are isolated from loved ones. Please pray for them and for everyone who is not as blessed as we are. Pray for our military personnel.

Enjoy your families with all your heart, and be oh, so thankful if you are still blessed with your parents. Most importantly, be thankful to God for making our lives possible and for gifting us with the reason for the season, His son Jesus Christ.

God Bless you, everyone, may you be safe and healthy. Until next time...

*Billie Page*

## Dates to Remember

Dec 25 Christmas Day

Jan 1 New Year's Day

Jan 20 Martin Luther King, Jr.

Feb 17 Presidents' Day

Feb 29 Leap Day

Mar 2 Texas Independence Day

Mar 19 First Day of Spring



## Who Am I?

Each volume of the County Tax Statement will feature a different TACA member. A few clues will be given so you can guess who our featured member is.

Each following volume will reveal our "Mystery Member" from last issue.

This volume's Mystery Member says: I love God, family, fishing, cards and dominoes.

I'm in my first term

I do collect property tax

I do vehicle registration

I'm from a family of 20 children

I love my job and interacting with people

I will retire in 2020

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ from the County of \_\_\_\_\_



## Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

HELPING TEXANS GO. HELPING TEXAS GROW.

Submitted By: Adam Shaivitz, Public  
Information Officer

### THANK YOU!

The Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR) would like to thank the county tax assessor-collectors and their staff for their cooperation over the last several months. Due to many changes being implemented concurrently, including new policies and procedures in the County Equipment Guide, execution of new interlocal agreements, and new county training requirements, we recognize and appreciate the time and effort that has been asked of you to ensure preparedness and compliance with these new policies. We also appreciate your patience as we work through unexpected road blocks along the way. While change is not always easy, it is necessary as we strive to improve our procedures and services to the Texas motoring public. Thank you!

#### Performance Quality and Recognition Program (PQRP)

The PQRP program recognizes tax assessor-collectors at three levels – Gold, Silver and Bronze – for outstanding performance and efficiency in processing title and registration transactions. The awards recognize exemplary customer service and going above-and-beyond in providing vehicle title and registration services. Additional PQRP details are available on the department's website at [www.txdmv.gov/tax-assessor-collector/pqrp](http://www.txdmv.gov/tax-assessor-collector/pqrp).

VTR received applications from nine counties for consideration of a PQRP award for FY 2019: two Gold level, three Silver level, and four Bronze level. The PQRP Selection Committee is currently reviewing applications.

#### Mandatory County Training Update

During the 86th Texas legislative session, SB 604 was passed requiring TxDMV to implement a training program for users of the department's Registration and Title System (RTS). The department has offered online training to county users on a *voluntary* basis for many years via VTR's eLearning platform, which will also be used to facilitate the new required training program. County tax assessor-collector employees and full-service deputy (FSD) staff are now *required* to take and pass courses aligned with assigned permissions in RTS. Training available through the eLearning system was expanded with 16 new modules that were launched between Nov. 18 and Dec. 16, and an additional eight existing modules will be updated in the following months. Current county and FSD staff will need to complete and verify all necessary training by Aug. 31, 2020.

#### Registration and Title System Release 9.5

VTR staff completed user acceptance testing for RTS Release 9.5, which deployed over the weekend of Dec. 13. Changes in this release included updates to various department-wide systems and programming to implement legislative initiatives. Items implemented in relation to legislation passed by the 86th Legislature with the 9.5 release included two specialty license plates, and the following:

- HB 1262 – Extended trailer registration for a period of one to five years, for trailers with a gross weight of 7,500 pounds or less.
- SB 604 – Required county training for associated RTS permissions.

#### New Specialty Plates

The specialty license plates shown below became available mid-December 2019. The China Service Medal and Disabled Veteran with China Service Medal specialty license plates were introduced during the 86th legislative session. The University of Virginia specialty license plate is being offered by the department's vendor, My Plates.



China Service Medal  
(non-vendor)

## DMV, continued

The specialty license plates shown below became available mid-December 2019. The China Service Medal and Disabled Veteran with China Service Medal specialty license plates were introduced during the 86th legislative session. The University of Virginia specialty license plate is being offered by the department's vendor, My Plates.



China Service Medal  
(non-vendor)



Disabled Veteran with China Service Medal  
(non-vendor)



University of Virginia  
(vendor)



Lobby of the Renaissance Hotel in Austin  
where our June conference will be held



# Become an Agent of TPWDs Boat Titling & Registration Program

*Have you or your staff ever received questions from constituents about registering or titling their boats or outboard motors?*

*Did you know that you could become a participant with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Boat Titling and Registration Program and offer these services to the residents of your county?*

As a participating TAC County Agent with TPWD:

- You retain ten percent of all boat/outboard motor titling and registration fees collected\*;
- You retain five percent of all boat/outboard motor tax collected;
- You have access to a phone bank of trained TPWD staff 8:00 am – 5:00 pm each business day to help you and your staff with questions about accepting or processing boat/outboard motor transactions;
- You have access to resource materials and training aids that are designed to help you help your customers.

\*Per Texas Parks & Wildlife Code, Chapter 31, Sections §31.0341(b) and §31.048(b), the amount retained by the tax assessor-collector shall be deposited to the credit of the officers salary fund of the county to be used for the sole purpose of paying the salaries of persons issuing vessel certificates of number, and vessel and outboard motor certificates of title.

Interested in more information? Please contact one of our TPWD Boat Field Liaisons at 1-512-389-4393 and we'll be happy to help you.

Best Regards,

Julie G. Aronow  
Program Manager  
Boat Titling, Registration & Marine Licensing

*The TPWD Boat Titling & Registration Program would like to thank all participating Tax Assessor-Collector Agents for a successful 2019! We look forward to another successful year in 2020!*

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If you have any questions about any of the information provided by TPWD in this newsletter, or about any other aspects of the Boat Titling & Registration Program, please contact a TPWD Boat Field Liaison at (512) 389-4393 for assistance.

# The Office of the Texas Secretary of State

By: Kristi Hart, Manager of Election Administration and Voter Registration  
December 2, 2019

Before we gaze into the year ahead, we must pause to acknowledge the successes of 2019. What a year it truly was for our office and for county election officials across Texas. New legislation paved the way for new reporting requirements that demanded the implementation of new systems, enhancements to current applications, and systemic changes to reporting processes. Several large long-term projects were completed with the integration and implementation of new applications. Finally, as the year comes to a close, voter registration renewal certificates are being mailed while jury reconstitutions and election security assessments remain in full swing.

Historically, voter registrars around the state reported voting history within thirty days of statewide elections. However, starting in November of 2019, daily reporting of voting history throughout the early voting period as well as on Election Day enabled our office to provide voter turnout information specific to all 254 Texas counties. Additionally, county officials reported precinct and logistical information to our office allowing the publication of a statewide list of polling locations by county for the voters of Texas. The successful implementation of these applications could not have been possible without the countless hours and tremendous efforts of county election officials across this great state. Based on this collaborative effort and feedback from our county officials, we are working diligently to develop additional improvements in both information collection and reporting functionality for March 2020.

The productivity of 2019 continued with the integration and implementation of several long-term projects. The DPS Web Portal was fully integrated into the statewide voter registration system in late summer providing a secure method of communication for county election officials and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) offices related to voter registration. Election Night Returns (ENR) processes were integrated into the TEAM application to enhance reporting of unofficial election night vote totals and to increase the security of this process. The new ENR Public Portal was introduced allowing statewide and county level results to be displayed in real time. Finally, a long-awaited change, the Texas Online system was enhanced to allow voters in suspense status to update their personal information including their address within their county of residence. Previously, this application was only available for active registrations.

New voter registration certificates are on their way! As we close out the year, our office is working with county officials to generate the files for the mass mailing of all new voter registration certificates. These renewal certificates will be sent to all active voters and will be valid for two years from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

The state is filled with anticipation of the upcoming 2020 election year. Candidate filing for the March primary elections is actively underway and candidate information is available on our website. The March primaries and November general election promise to be see record turnout with voter registration predicted to be at an all-time high

As we approach the March primaries, here are a few important dates to remember:

- **Monday, February 3, 2020 (29th day before Election Day)**
  - Last day to register to vote for the Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> Primary Election.
- **Tuesday, February 18, 2020 (14th day before Election Day)**
  - First day to vote early in person.
- **Friday, February 21, 2020 (11th day before Election Day)**
  - Last day to receive an application for a ballot to be voted by mail or an FPCA from a registered voter.
- **Friday, February 28, 2020 (4th day before Election Day)**
  - Last day to vote early by personal appearance.
- **Tuesday, March 3, 2020 - Election Day**
  - 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Polls Open
  - 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Voter registrar's office is open



SOS, Continued

The voter registration team will be working extended hours to support county officials during the early voting period. Please stay tuned for additional information regarding those hours.

We have a full slate of upcoming webinars and training opportunities for county election officials in preparation for the 2020 elections. Please keep your eyes open for invitations and specific information. Please do not forget that all of our presentations, training manuals, and resource materials can be located on the DocShare site. If there are topics that you would like for our office to include in our upcoming training sessions, please let us know. We want to hear from you!

Finally, don't forget to save the date for the 38th Annual Election Law Seminar for County Election Officials. It will be held at the Renaissance Hotel in Austin, on July 27 – 29, 2020.

Our office is always here to help! Call us anytime at (800)252-8683 or email us at [Elections@sos.texas.gov](mailto:Elections@sos.texas.gov).



Ruth R Hughs,  
Current Secretary of State

### Condolences to the family of:



**Ruby Jewell McCause**, 93. Passed away September 21, on her birthday in Amarillo. Ruby served as Moore County Tax Assessor/Collector and retired from there after 20 years.

## From the Membership

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### Welcome Two New Tax Assessor-Collectors



Welcome Andrea "Andi" Ferguson. Andi was appointed Hood County Tax Assessor-Collector on August 26 2019. The appointment follows the resignation of TAC Teresa McCoy, who moved to Arkansas.



Welcome to the new Val Verde TAC.

Rogelio (Roy) Musquiz Jr. was appointed Val Verde County TAC on Dec 1, 2019.

He replaces retiring Beatriz Munoz who served as the Val Verde TAC for 15 years.

# *Who Am I?* Revealed

*Our very first subject of Who Am I? is this guy,*



*Our very own Shay Luedeke, Bell County Tax Assessor-Collector*

*May the Force be with You*

## *Presidential Activities*

*TACA President Cathy Talcott provided some photos from her activities from the last few months:*



*Coastal Bend Regional Meeting in Edna, Texas*



*Comal County Staff Training*



*The Bluebonnet Region met in Gonzales on September 12. There, Williamson County TAC Larry Gaddes was voted as their nominee as Tax Assessor-Collector of the Year.*



*Comptroller's Expo, November 6.*



*With Comptroller Staff Craig Williams and Catie Burleigh*



*With PTAD's Korry Castillo, Nicole Caston and Craig Williams.*



*East Texas Lunch Bunch in Livingston on September 17.  
Tammy McRae, Leslie Burks and Cathy Talcott presented Senator Robert Nichols  
with the TACA Legislative Leadership Award*



*Visiting Ronnie Keister and Chief  
Deputy Mary Gomez in Lubbock  
on December 2*



*On October 17, the Conference Planning Committee met at the Renaissance Hotel in Austin. L to R are Sarah Lazarowitz of County Progress, Jefferson County TAC Allison Getz, TACA President Cathy Talcott, the "Renaissance Steer," Amy Lawson of Texas Association of Counties, Madison County TAC Karen Lane, Megan West of Texas Association of Counties, and Williamson County TAC Larry Gaddes. Not pictured is Montgomery County TAC Tammy McRae.*

Just for fun.....

Little Larry!!!



Pictured with Billie Page

## TACA Legislative Leadership Awards



Michelle French and John Ames had the honor of presenting Senator Royce West with one of the TACA Legislative Leadership Awards on Tuesday September 3, 2019 at the Dallas County Commissioner's Court.



Shay Luedeke, Tax Assessor-Collector of Bell County, and Cathy Talcott, Tax Assessor-Collector of Comal County presented Senator Dawn Buckingham the Legislative Leadership award on behalf of the Tax Assessor-Collector Association of Texas for her efforts during the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session at the Central Texas Republican Women's monthly meeting on September 16.



From Shay Luedeke:

## Tax Assessor-Collectors Continue to Influence Policy Change

<https://www.county.org/News/County-Issues/2019/October/Tax-Assessor-Collectors-Continue-to-Influence>

Texas Association of Counties featured us in the October issue of their magazine, County. Please click the link in order to read the full article.



## East Texas Lunch Bunch Regional News:

The ETLB group is a combination of the Beaumont and Longview regions. Since our last newsletter, we have had two meetings.

September 17<sup>th</sup>, Leslie Burks hosted our meeting in Livingston.



The attending TACs are pictured here with Idalia Lopez from Beaumont Regional Service Center.

December 11<sup>th</sup>, Tammy McRae hosted our meeting in Conroe:





Merry Christmas from Laptop Larry's family!!!



You got our votes!

# 37<sup>th</sup> Annual V.G. Young School for County Tax Assessor-Collectors



# Give 'Em the F.I.N.G.E.R., Hey Say What!

## V. G. Young's 37<sup>th</sup> Annual School for Tax Assessor-Collectors

By Grace Everhart

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual School for Tax Assessor-Collectors was held November 12-14, 2019 at Embassy Suites, San Marcos; the general session was kicked off with key note speaker and author Mark Yarborough giving an informative and entirely entertaining session about burnout which affects millions of Americans each year. Mark shared his story as someone who suffered from burnout and shared his "give 'em the finger philosophy" on how to beat burnout. So, let's give burnout the F.I.N.G.E.R.!

An informative legislative update was given on the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative session with our moderator Honorable Cathy Talcott and panelists Katy Estrada, Legislative Manager, Texas Association of Counties, and the Honorable Ronnie Keister, Larry Gaddes, Shay Luedeke and Kristy Roe. To say it was a big session for our offices is an understatement; a minute recap of the changes includes salvage dealer changes, Webdealer, disaster relief bill for property tax and the changes made to Truth-In-Taxation – some of it literally Latin! Thank you to our panelists and everyone that worked so hard to make our voices heard. If you missed any of this session or just want more visit [www.county.org](http://www.county.org), click on "Legislative" and "Bills by Office."

Cyber security, a very hot topic these days as criminals get more and more creative; and with ransomware striking some of our own and other entities in Texas and around the United States our fears are warranted. Our speaker Senior Special Agent, Scott Riddick, U.S. Secret Service; provided a deep look at the current trends in cybercrime and some insight into the minds of the criminal. He shared payment preference of these criminals - Bit Coin currency and the reasons it is preferred – it is anonymous, accessible all over the world and there is no monetary limit. The average cost to an entity attacked by ransomware is \$133,000 whether it is payment or other means to rebuild/regain the data.

Truth in Taxation, as if cyber security was not scary enough, our legendary Connie Rose, Director of Education, McCreary, Veselka, Bragg & Allen, P.C., shared an update on Truth in Taxation, changes brought to us by the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative session. We will soon adapt to "no new revenue dates", "voter approval tax rate", "no new revenue M&O rate" Latin terms such as "de minimus" tax rate and new posting requirements for county websites. Connie is always so informative and leaves us wanting for more so if you missed her presentation or want a copy of the slide presentation go to <https://vgyi.tamu.edu/conferences>.

There were phenomenal breakout sessions and training I could go on and on. This annual school is so valuable for our training needs and breakout sessions allow us to share with each other ideas, experiences, standard operating procedures and tricks of the trade that may be useful for others. But, it's not just about the training. It's about the comradery, networking and being with the only other people who really understand what we do. It's about honoring some of our peers who go above and beyond – congratulations Honorable Tammy McRae, President Elect, Tax Assessor-Collectors Association, Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector and our 2019 Tax Assessor-Collector of the Year and congratulations to our worthy nominees Honorable Larry Gaddes of Williamson County, Shay Luedeke of Bell County, Rena Scherer of Victoria County and Pablo (Paul) Villarreal Jr. of Hidalgo County. You all exemplify the qualities of great Tax Assessor-Collectors, leaders and mentors. Congratulations on a job well done!

And a special word of gratitude and awe to Sherry Mueck the fearless leader of the Conference Planning Committee and her committee members for the planning and implementation of a great conference. Dr. Peter McGuill, Program Director V.G. Young Institute of County Government and your staff Katy Gottwald and Natalie Hejl thank you for all the time, effort and expertise you all provide to us. Our vendors, without them there would be no conference so to each of you thanks for always being there to support us at our conferences and with our day to day business. This is almost like the "Grammy Awards" I do not want to leave anyone out - this Conference would not be what it was without each and every one of us doing what we do.

Happy New Year and we'll see you at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual V. G. Young School for County Tax Assessor-Collectors, November 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 at the Waco Convention Center.



## 2019 Tax Assessor-Collector of the Year Luncheon



Larry Gaddes  
*Williamson County*



Shay Luedeke  
*Bell County*



Tammy McRae  
*Montgomery County*



Rena Scherer  
*Victoria County*



Paul Villarreal Jr.  
*Hidalgo County*

**Congratulations to the Honorable**

# **Tammy McRae**

**Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector**



**Recipient of the 2019 Tax Assessor-Collector of the Year**





Last, but not least, thank you, McCreary, Veselka, Bragg & Allen, PC for hosting our Annual Sponsor Appreciation Luncheon.

We appreciate all of our wonderful and generous sponsors.