



COUNTY CONNECTION

HIDALGO COUNTY: GOVERNMENT IN ACTION | September 2014

Message from

County Judge Ramon Garcia

I believe in the American Dream. I believe in the promise of prosperity, good healthcare and a quality education which have always been the cornerstone of our great nation.



Unfortunately, for many of us, the promise has lost some of its magic. I was raised to believe if I worked hard, I would get ahead. I was fortunate to get a higher education and enter a profes-

sion that helped me achieve the American Dream. But there are others who work just as hard and harder who are living below the poverty level.

Last May, Commissioners Court unanimously supported raising the salaries of 84 of our lowest paid workers to \$10.10 per hour. Doing so would cost the county about \$137,000; it would also help bring those employees closer to the American Dream.

These employees are clerks, maintenance workers, and groundskeepers. They also believe in the promise that if they work hard, they will get ahead. They have families to support. Even with the increase in pay, they may still fall under the Federal poverty guideline of an annual income of \$23,850 for a family of four.

When our budget is adopted this month, Hidalgo County will be among a growing number of public bodies that have increased the minimum wage to comply with President Obama's recommendation.

I urge our fellow counties, cities and other municipalities to join us and increase their pay to at least \$10.10 per hour. Robert Reich, former Labor Secretary under President Bill Clinton, said when the minimum wage was raised in 1996 business predicted millions of jobs would be lost.

"In fact, we had more job gains over the next four years than in any comparable period in American history," Reich said.

Increasing the minimum wage is the right thing to do. It will make a difference in the lives of our 84 employees and their families.

History in the making: County, cities sign UT agreement as construction progresses on med school



the area's commitment to support the medical school with \$47.5 million over the next 10 years.

"As we move forward, I can't help but reflect on the role that this institution has played in providing access to higher education to the people of the Rio Grande Valley," Garcia said. "Who could have imagined 87 years ago the impact on our South Texas community."

Construction began July 1 on the 88,000-square-foot medical school academic building. In addition to Cigarroa and Garcia, the others signing the MOU were: McAllen Mayor Jim Darling, Edinburg Mayor Richard Garcia, Pharr Mayor Leopoldo "Polo" Palacios Jr., and Mission Mayor Beto Salinas.

Hidalgo County Judge Ramon Garcia joined University of Texas Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa and four mayors in signing a Memorandum of Understanding that details

Under the agreement, McAllen will pay \$2 million, Edinburg and Hidalgo County will each pay \$1 million, Pharr will pay \$500,000, and Mission will pay \$250,000 each year.

Take steps to stay healthy this month

Recent reports of West Nile virus, a case of a coronavirus and the upcoming flu season are good reasons to take precautions this fall.

Hidalgo County reported its first two cases of West Nile virus two weeks ago, with one victim becoming the third reported death of West Nile in the state. With the recent rainfall it is even more important to take the following steps:

- Stay indoors at dusk and dawn.
- Dress in long sleeves/pants when outdoors.
- Use an insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Drain standing water in your yard and neighborhood.

Visit www.txwestnile.org to learn more.

Like flu, coronaviruses are spread from an infected person by coughing, sneezing or close personal contact. These viruses may also spread by touching contaminated objects and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

Wash your hands, don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth, and avoid contact with those who are ill.

Common human coronaviruses cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory track illnesses of short duration. Symptoms may include runny nose, cough, sore throat and fever and sometimes can lead to lower-respiratory track illnesses, such as pneumonia. These are more common in people with cardiovascular disease, compromised immune systems, and the elderly.

There are currently no vaccines, but you can reduce your risk of infection by washing your hands often with soap and water, not touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and avoiding close contact with those who are ill.



Did you know?

The county is divided into four precincts governed by five elected officials at Commissioners Court.

County Judge Ramon Garcia

Pct. 1 Commissioner
A.C. Cuellar Jr.

Pct. 2 Commissioner
Hector "Tito" Palacios

Pct. 3 Commissioner
Joe M. Flores

Pct. 4 Commissioner
Joseph Palacios

To see which precinct serves you, visit the Planning Department online at: www.co.hidalgo.tx.us or scan the QR code.



Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Constables assist in keeping our border secure



With the assistance of Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Constable deputies, Homeland Security Investigators are keeping our border secure. A group of 19 HSI agents from around the country were assigned to South Texas for 90 days to assist the local HSI office in McAllen work cases of human smuggling, human trafficking and narcotics smuggling. Pct. 4 Constable Atanacio “J.R.” Gaitan Jr., and HSI have established a working relationship. The agreement allows deputy constables to be dispatched when called by HSI to assist. Constable Gaitan utilized federal and state funds from the Stonegarden and Border Star grants, respectively, to help fund the initiative.

Don't know who to call in Hidalgo County? This handy chart will help direct you to the right office to answer your questions.

Contact the County Clerk's office when you need:

- Birth Certificate
- Death Certificate
- Property Deeds
- Real Estate Information
- Marriage Licenses
- Doing Business As (DBA)

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| County Clerk's Office | |  |
| Arturo Guajardo Jr. | Ph: (956)318-2100 | |
| 100 N. Closner - 1st Floor | Fx: (956)318-2105 | |
| P.O. Box 58 | Hours | |
| Edinburg, Texas 78539 | 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. | |
| | Monday - Friday | |

The Tax Assessor - Collector's Office can help you with the following services:

- Auto License Plates
- Property Tax Payments
- Vehicle Registrations
- Auto Title Transfers
- Voter Registration

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| Tax Assessor-Collector's Office | |  |
| Pablo "Paul" Villarreal | Ph: (956)318-2157 | |
| 2804 US Hwy 281 | Fx: (956)318-2733 | |
| Edinburg, Texas 78539 | Hours | |
| | 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. | |
| | Monday - Friday | |

The District Clerk's Office can help you with:

- Child Support Payments
- Lawsuit Filings
- Your Court Dates
- Jury Duty
- Passport Applications

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| District Clerk's Office | |  |
| Laura Hinojosa | Ph: (956)318-2200 | |
| 100 N. Closner - 1st Floor | Fx: (956) 318-2251 | |
| Edinburg, Texas 78539 | Hours | |
| | 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. | |
| | Monday - Friday | |

Contact the Sheriff's Office when you need information on:

- Traffic Laws
- County Jail
- County Ordinances
- Disaster Response
- Routine Law Enforcement

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|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Sheriff's Office | |  |
| Sheriff Eddie Guerra | Ph: (956)383-8114 | |
| 711 El Cibolo Rd | Fx: (956) 393-6179 | |
| Edinburg, Texas 78541 | Office Hours | |
| | 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. | |
| For Emergencies Dial 911 | Monday - Friday | |

*Scan QR codes for more information.

Children treated to free supplies and more at Back to School Fair in Alamo



Parents and children preparing for the 2014 school year took advantage of the Hidalgo County Precinct 2 “Back to School Fair” held Friday, August 15 at the South Alamo Community Resource Center. Over 300 residents attended the annual event. Local agencies and businesses partnered with the CRC to provide back to school supplies.

Representatives from the county’s Health and Human Services Department, Sheriff’s Office, WIC, South Texas Literacy Coalition and Magic Valley Electric Cooperative set up booths to inform residents of the their services and passed out supplies including tote bags, folders, notebooks and pencils. The Rio Grande Empowerment Zone donated \$200 to the CRC to assist in the purchase of back to school supplies to be distributed at the fair.

Back to school themed door prizes were raffled off to the participating residents and refreshments were given.

“Parents bring their children to take part in this fun filled event which creates excitement for children starting the new school year,” said Melida Ochoa, CRC Director/Coordinator.



Hidalgo County District Clerk's Office



Laura Hinojosa
Hidalgo County District Clerk

On September 17, 2013 Hidalgo County began accepting civil case e-filings in anticipation of the e-filing mandate which took effect January 1. This means attorneys are required to file their documents electronically.

Attorneys and individuals conducting business with the District Clerk should visit www.efiletexas.gov for more details and information regarding the e-filing process.



At the 2013 District Clerk's Open House, constituents were able to look over an old criminal docket circa 1895, when one of the most common crimes recorded was "theft of meat cattle."

available for the courts and their jury trials. The District Clerk Office yields approximately 2,000 to 2,400 jurors monthly. When summoned for jury duty, potential jurors are encouraged to complete jury questionnaires online at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/ejuror.

The District Clerk Office is also proud to serve as a passport acceptance facility as designated by the U.S. Department of State. Passport applications are processed Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; walk-ins are welcome. No appointments are required.

Whether verifying fees, responding to your jury summons, or accessing case and passport information, you will find all the information you need at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/districtclerk. The District Clerk Office also encourages the public's honest assessment of their services as they continue to evolve and improve through your valuable input. Email your comments to: districtclerk@co.hidalgo.tx.us

The District Clerk Office, led by the Honorable Laura Hinojosa, is committed to providing exemplary public service to the judicial system, its courts and the constituents of the County of Hidalgo.

The office serves as the registrar, recorder and custodian of all documents that are part of criminal and civil actions and works with judges to obtain timely disposition of all court cases.

It is also responsible for managing these records so that they are easily retrieved for public information, preserved for permanent storage in archives, or disposed of according to the law.

As of August, the District Clerk Office had filed 5,728 active criminal cases, 21,297 civil cases and 13,235 family cases. The District Clerk Office provides additional support to courts by managing and coordinating the jury summons process for the county, thereby ensuring there are sufficient qualified jurors



Once a document has been restored, it is rebound and each paper is placed in a plastic sheet for protection.

Hidalgo County National Night Out



The Hidalgo County Crime Stoppers, in conjunction with the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, held two National Night Out events this year. Typically held in August, National Night Out provides residents the opportunity to meet their local law enforcement agencies. Pictured at the Penitas event is Emergency Management Coordinator Belinda Alvarez, helping children spin the wheel for prizes. National Night Out helps residents connect to the officers who help keep them safe.

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice services to the approximately 900,000 residents of our county as well as a variety of services offered by our four precinct offices to residents who live outside city limits. We partner with the cities in our county on services, special projects and economic development. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens. We are committed to providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, collaboration, fairness, respect and fiscal responsibility.

Stay Connected!



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Scan the QR codes and follow us on social media.

County staff members participate in the ALS “Ice Bucket” Challenge

With buckets full of ice and cold water, Hidalgo County employees participated in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge after work hours. County departments and offices challenged one another to either take on the challenge, or to make a monetary donation to the ALS Foundation and most did both. To date, employees have donated over \$600 to the ALS Foundation and \$323 to the ALS Texas Chapter. The donation will help fund research to find a cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as Lou Gehrig’s Disease.



Hidalgo County Tax Office



Budget and Management Department



Hidalgo County Judge’s Office



Health and Human Services



Planning Department



Scan QR Code to view a video of the Ice Bucket challenges.

Commissioners approve a resolution in support of the UTPA Bronc mascot



Precinct 4 Commissioner Joseph Palacios proposed a resolution urging the University of Texas System to preserve the local spirit and regional history by retaining the Bronc as the new University of Texas Rio Grande Valley mascot. Commissioners unanimously approved the resolution. More than two dozen alumni accepted the resolution on behalf of the University of Texas-Pan American.

Calling all Rosie the Riveters



Attention fellow Rio Grande Valley residents!

In movies, newspapers, posters, photographs and articles, the campaign stressed the patriotic need for women to enter the work force and many did.

Did someone in your family or someone you know participate in the “Rosie the Riveter” movement during World War II?

We are reaching out to everyone for information on women, especially those from the Rio Grande Valley, who answered the call to duty during World War II as widespread male enlistment left gaping holes in the industrial labor force.

If so, we want to talk to them! “Rosie the Riveter” was the star of a government campaign aimed at recruiting women for the munitions industry.

Rosies were crucial to the war effort and Hidalgo County would like to help recognize them for their service to our country. If you have information on a Rosie the Riveter please contact the Hidalgo County Public Affairs Division via email at public.affairs@co.hidalgo.tx.us or by phone at 956-292-7026.