

# OPINION

## THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### The Lufkin Daily News editorial board

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### OUR OPINION

## All Hallow's Eve

### Observing a few simple precautions helps keep trick-or-treating safe, fun for all

Millions of children are terrified each year by the idea that the boogeyman will get them.

Descriptions of this fictional monster vary around the world, although there are a couple of similarities. A shadow that flickers and lurks in the fading light, a bump in the night or a scratch on a window often announce his arrival. Another common theme is that he won't attack those who are considered "good," preferring to terrorize the "naughty," particularly children who have disobeyed their parents.

One of the earliest references to this legendary creature dates to the 1500s, although he's probably prowled the world much longer.

But there's nothing imaginary about the monsters lurking in our neighborhoods in 2022. As we report on Page 4A of today's issue of The Lufkin Daily News, there are 340 sex offenders in Angelina County. The graphic on our front page is a reminder for Lufkin and Angelina County residents that putting an end to these crimes is their responsibility. There have been 42 arrests for sexual assault in Angelina County since the start of 2022. Thirty-five of those arrests have been for crimes against minors. As we have said before, stories about sexual abuse or assault appear far too often in the pages of this newspaper because they happen far too often in this community.

And sadly, "stranger danger" is not the reason those numbers are increasing, according according to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, which states 90% of sexual assault victims do not report the offense, while 80% of them know their offender.

Angelina County Sheriff's Office investigator Serena Holland said she quickly learned she was only scratching the surface when she began investigating claims of family violence and sexual abuse.

"The most shocking thing I learned when I first started was how often people do not report (sexual assault) to law enforcement," she said. "I never could understand, then, why people do not report it, because it happens so, so often."

And it's not an issue unique to this community. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, there are 204 sex offenders in Nacogdoches County, 95 in Trinity County, 294 in Polk County, 110 in Tyler County, 157 in Jasper County, 389 in Gregg County (Longview) and 646 in Smith County (Tyler). Harris County, home to the largest city (Houston) in the state, has 9,805 sex offenders.

Texas does not require individuals listed on the sex offender registry to notify their neighbors. However, the sex offender registry maintained by DPS can be a valuable resource for deciding where to visit while

trick-or-treating. Free to access by the public, the registry lists and pinpoints all registered sex offenders in a given county.

Being aware of your surroundings is a critical first step to staying safe. With Halloween coming up on Monday, and with all the fun and excitement that accompany the holiday, here are some additional safety tips to remember — whether we're parents of trick or treaters or not. The Insurance Council of Texas has issued its annual list of Halloween safety tips, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. It's a good primer for parents before the big, frightening night:

- Trick-or-treat in a group and make sure the children in your group stay together. Children should never venture out of sight from their guardian and should never enter a house unless they know the person and their guardian is accompanying them.

- Carry a flashlight at all times. Flashlights will keep you and your party visible while also lighting your path.

- Children should avoid homes that don't have their outside lights turned on.

- Children should never talk to strangers or get into strangers' cars.

- Always use the sidewalk and crosswalks near busy intersections. Walk on the side of the road that is facing traffic so you can see oncoming traffic at all times. Be sure to look both ways when crossing the street.

- Be careful around lit candles or luminaries.

- Do not allow your children to eat candy until it has been inspected. Children might be tempted to reach into their bags for candy before you've gone home to inspect their loot. Explain to them that you need to check the candy first for safety reasons.

- Toss any candy that has an open wrapper. Examine candy that can possibly be a choking hazard, or too difficult for your child to eat, and take them away. Also avoid any homemade treats unless you know the person who served them and can attest to the food's safety.

- Don't just leave your children with all their Halloween candy. On a good haul, your children can accumulate more candy during Halloween than you would ever consider buying them in an entire year. After inspecting the candy, you should set it aside and distribute it to your children in limited amounts. The last thing you want is your children eating a year's worth of candy in one night.

- Last, but certainly not least, if you do see anything suspicious in your neighborhood, call the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Halloween is supposed to be fun. These safety tips can help ensure a safe and fun Halloween for your kids and you.

## Hunting season right around corner

As the month of October comes to a close, sportsmen and women across the state are counting down the days until the upcoming hunting season. With white-tailed deer and duck season just around the corner, I want to remind all of my fellow hunters to make sure you've purchased your hunting license and federal duck stamp before heading to the field.



TRENT ASHBY

I'd also like to encourage you to consider downloading the Texas Outdoor Annual App, where you can access information about hunting season dates and bag limits for your county, find public hunting lands nearby and review various hunting regulations, even without internet service.

You also can access your hunting and fishing license on your device and even purchase your hunting license through the app. For more information, visit [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov).

With that, we'll dive back into our examination of House interim charges.

The next stop on our tour of House committees is the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence. With nine members, the committee has legislative jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to criminal law,

penalties, criminal procedure in the courts of Texas and revisions or amendments to the penal code.

The committee also oversees two state agencies, the Office of State Prosecuting Attorney and the Texas State Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision.

During the interim, the House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence will monitor the implementation of policies enacted during the 87th legislative session and ensure the measures and outcomes are working as intended.

For instance, HB 1540 made much-needed changes to human trafficking laws by strengthening protections for victims and adding additional investigatory resources for prosecutors. While the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force has made significant progress in combatting human trafficking offenders, this bill serves to bolster our efforts by providing additional resources to the ongoing fight against human trafficking.

The committee also will study re-entry and integration programs and make recommendations for reducing employment barriers for certain people with a criminal record.

Reentry programs are designed to assist returning citizens who have served their time and are motivated to "reenter" society by competing for a job, attaining stable housing, supporting their families and contributing to their communities.

The study also reviews the length of time certain criminal offenses remain on a defendant's record and considers the impact of expanding the offenses that qualify for an order of non-disclosure.

The House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence also will study the availability of victim services, including community-based trauma recovery, housing and relocation assistance, employment protections and other services that enhance recovery and safety for victims of violent crimes.

Additionally, committee members are charged with making recommendations for streamlining the grant administration process and improving access to community-based services in neighborhoods with the highest crime rates and for victims of violent crimes.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if we can help you in any way. My district office may be reached at (936) 634-2762. Additionally, I welcome you to follow along on my official Facebook page, where I will post regular updates on what's happening in your State Capitol and share information that could be useful to you and your family: [facebook.com/RepTrentAshby/](https://www.facebook.com/RepTrentAshby/).

Trent Ashby is the state representative for District 57 that includes Angelina, Houston, Leon, Madison, San Augustine and Trinity counties. His email address is [trent.ashby@house.state.tx.us](mailto:trent.ashby@house.state.tx.us). He and his staff are available during the week at (512) 463-0508 or (936) 634-2762.



## Plan to be a part of Lufkin's progress

As we continue through the fall season — which I might add, is for sure my favorite season this year — the weather has been incredible.



MARK HICKS

These past few weeks, when I drive around Lufkin and view the parks and playgrounds, it is evident that a lot of people are enjoying the beautiful weather, too. It is always nice seeing the city parks being utilized and bringing joy to the community. As a child, I enjoyed being a Lufkinite during the fall season with all of the festivals, football games, hayrides and many more fun fall activities.

Just a few days ago, the city of Lufkin had the privilege of hosting the Heritage Festival. If you were not in attendance, the festival was an opportunity for citizens to come together and share different aspects of their culture: music, food and much more.

The event has existed for a few years, but this year it really took off and flourished. The weather was great, and I think a good time was had by all. The organizers did a great job, and their hard work did not go unnoticed.

As I reflect on the event, it does make me think about Lufkin's past and future. I think we can all agree that a few generations ago, an event like this might not be as embraced as it is today. I do not believe people should wallow in the past; however, reflecting on the past does help us realize the progress of our present and the hope for our future.

Progress is an interesting word. When you think of the word progress, what comes to mind? Sometimes people think progress means greatness or perfection. But really, the only thing progress is, to me: making things better.

If a person or entity is continually progressing, then greatness or, at minimum, high quality is often the outcome, but that is not a guarantee. Furthermore, it is often the little areas of progression that add up to monumental changes and positive

outcomes. I truly believe Lufkin is a carousel of progress.

When you reflect on your own life, how do you think you are progressing? Do you feel you are making things better for yourself, your family and/or your community?

You may want to think back to your own past and history. Are there situations you maturely handle now, that maybe, 10 or so years ago, you wouldn't have been as wise, and things wouldn't have worked out so well? Do you have more patience? I am sure we all can reflect and think of ways we have personally progressed.

As you think about your future and your personal progression, I hope and challenge all of you to make plans to be a part of Lufkin's progress. Working to make our community better, even if it is in just small ways, adds up to a big difference and will create cherished memories for you and your family along the way. Because ... as Lufkin progresses, so will you.

Mark Hicks is the mayor for the city of Lufkin. His email address is [mhicks@cityoflufkin.com](mailto:mhicks@cityoflufkin.com).

### HEADLINES IN Local HISTORY

#### OCTOBER 29-30

- Five years ago**
  - Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 1836 celebrates its 80th anniversary.
  - Play Dough Promotions presents Laugh Outta Lufkin Comedy Show at The Pines Theater.
- Ten years ago**
  - Tyler Stubblefield and JaBryce Taylor lead the Panthers to a 40-7 homecoming win over the College Park Cavaliers.
  - The Lufkin Daily News receives a Texas

historical marker from the Texas Historical Commission.

- Twenty years ago**
  - David Dewhurst, the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, campaigns in Lufkin.
  - Candlelight vigil sponsored by the Women's Shelter of East Texas honors domestic violence victims.

From the pages of The Lufkin Daily News, compiled by The History Center, [TheHistoryCenterOnline.com](http://TheHistoryCenterOnline.com).

### MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley

