

Opinion

El Paso Times

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Tim Archuleta, editor
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OUR VIEW

Dear Gov. Abbott: You must lead Texas to safety

We must eliminate the public health crisis of gun violence

Governor Abbott: We've seen you console the broken after disasters — after the evil that humankind does to itself. You are a trusted friend of the NRA — and we don't expect you to stop being one. But you also have traveled around the state to pay respects to the multiplying number of dead, to acknowledge the gruesome details, and to thank the brave first responders at mass shootings in El Paso, Odessa, Santa Fe, Sutherland Springs and Dallas.



Abbott

We join you in support of the Second Amendment. Always will. We, too, are gun owners. But you must find the will to lead Texas to safety from this growing public health crisis. We need to lead the way on finding how to reduce mass shootings.

Is this the legacy that Greg Abbott wants?

After a horrific August, Texans lead the nation when it comes to shedding their lifeblood while America grasps for how to respond to mass shootings.

We want to help you with that. Let's help Texas. Help America.

Let's work together in honor of Texans whose names are now on headstones, such as: Officers Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael Smith, Patrick Zamarripa and Brent Thompson, Dallas; guest pastor Bryan Holcombe, seven members of his family, and 18 more names, Sutherland Springs; Kyle McLeod, Angelique Ramirez, Sabika Sheikh and seven more names, Santa Fe; Jordan and Andre Anchondo (who died shielding their infant son), and 20 others, El Paso; Mary Granados, Edwin Peregrino and five more, Odessa.

What those victims have in common is that all were killed since you became governor in January 2015. We know this is not the legacy you want. But it's yours until you do something to help change it.

Look at the common thread

Mass shooters, all but one armed with semi-automatic, military assault-style rifles, have slaughtered 69 Texans since 2007 when you were attorney general.

People, not guns, spilled this precious Texas blood. But their choice of gun has introduced civilians to gushing wounds previously seen only on battlefields. We know that's a touchy subject politically, and that you defend the right to own this type of weapon. But the fact is, this type of weapon kills more people, more quickly, with more trauma, that is less survivable, no matter where a bullet hits a human body.

The doctors know it. The coroners know it. You know it.

Mass shooters are changing life in Texas. You did not grow up in a world where attending church or going shopping were mass-shooting risks, where active-shooter drills were part of schoolchildren's lives — where energetic, hyperactive students learn to go silent as instructed.

What does it say about us that active-shooter drills in elementary schools and church-goers who carry guns are among our current so-called solutions? This alone — this unacceptable impact on our children, and how we live our lives — should motivate you to demand better ways to protect our beloved Texas.

Why are we calling on you publicly? You've rejected our previous attempts to talk to you about this state of emergency. We wanted to learn how Texas' ranking as America's leading state in mass shooting deaths affects you and the office of governor. The toll must be heavy for you. It is for all Texans.

A governor's responsibility

We count on you for leadership. Leadership in crises like these calls for bringing together people who are far apart on what to do. It calls for placing oneself in the middle and demanding that they hear each other out with respect for one another's opposing views. It calls for supporting solutions not everyone likes, or that you yourself don't like.

Yet, you are uniquely positioned to seize this moment, to do what it takes even if it means displeasing most of the people, this time.

We invite you to find common ground on ways to reduce mass shootings. We don't pretend to have the answers, but we know many of the topics worth exploring — including some you may consider off limits. They include:

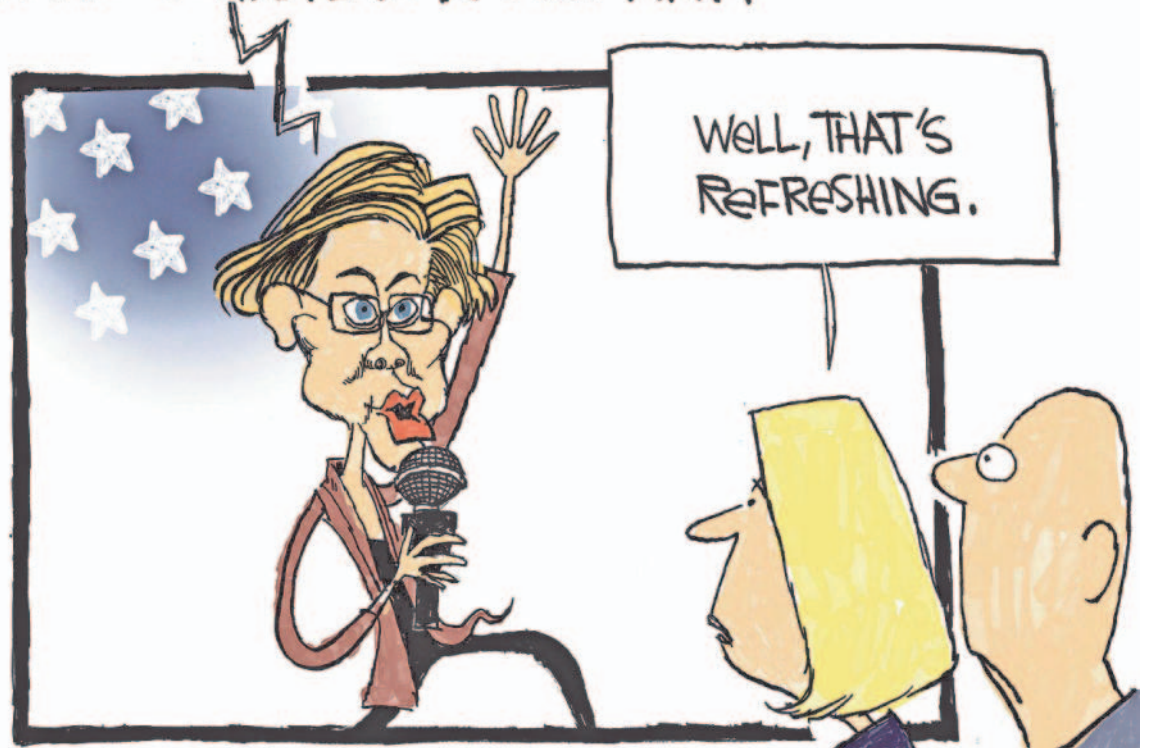
Call a special session. You've resisted it. But do you really want to wait until 2021, considering all that has happened in 2019? Do you want more lives lost on your watch and on your conscience? What we have learned from your current approach of not meeting

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CARTOONIST'S TAKE

IF YOU LIKE YOUR PRIVATE INSURANCE... YOU'RE GONNA LOSE IT ANYWAY!

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Veterans deserve access to justice system



Your Turn

Nathan L. Hecht and Victor A. Flores
Guest columnists

On this Veterans Day, we honor the brave men and women in uniform for the sacrifices they've made and continue to make for our safety and freedom. Sadly, once back home, many of our veterans have a very difficult time making ends meet. Many suffer from other challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can create difficulties finding and keeping a job. Among the challenges veterans face when reintegrating into civilian life is accessing the legal help they need.

Texas has the second-highest population of veterans in the country, and a distressing number of Texas veterans are poor or homeless. Some 5.6 million Texans, including a significant number of our veterans, qualify for legal aid. Legal issues account for three of the top 10 unmet needs of homeless veterans, according to the annual survey of homeless and formerly homeless veterans by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

So, how do Texas veterans facing legal issues get help? Legal aid programs, local bar associations, law schools and pro bono lawyers are part of the fabric of providing civil legal aid. They have all assisted veterans who are wrongly denied critical medical care, disability and other benefits, or who need help with family matters arising from deployment.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation, created in 1984 to provide funding for civil legal aid in Texas, is committed to the vision that all Texans will have equal access to justice, regardless of income. The Foundation recently awarded more than \$6 million in two-year grants to 13 Texas legal aid providers to provide civil legal services to low-income veterans. In 2018, TAJF grantees helped nearly 9,000 veterans obtain access to the justice system.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation has also established the Joe Jamail Endowment for Veteran Legal Services, a fund that ensures that Texas veterans have access to legal help. Since its inception in 2017, the endowment has raised more than \$878,000.

This week (Nov. 10-16) has been designated Texas Veterans Legal Aid Week. Clinics and workshops will be held throughout the state to provide assistance for qualified veterans who need help with critical civil legal issues.

There will be two clinics in El Paso. The first, hosted



Thousands enjoy the 2017 Veteran's Day parade in downtown El Paso. The hourlong parade featured veterans from various wars, bands and high school JROTC groups. MARK LAMBIE/EL PASO TIMES

by Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, will be at El Paso VA Healthcare System (main), 5005 N. Piedras, second floor, from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday. The EP Bar Veterans Legal Clinic will hold a clinic at the El Paso Community College, 9050 Viscount from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

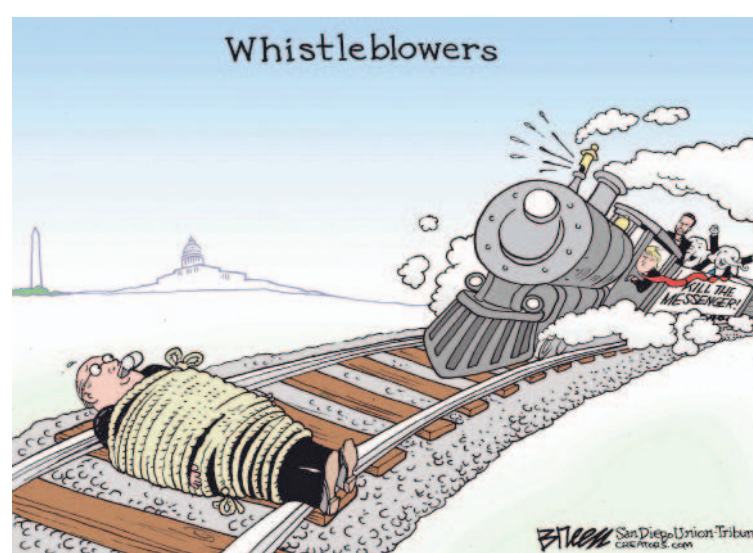
If you are unable to attend one of the clinics, TAJF is offering a live chat on their website, texaslawhelp.org/tvlaw-2019, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Nov. 11 through Nov. 15. Or reach their legal hotline by calling 1-800-622-2520. Select option 2 for the Veterans Legal Assistance Project.

Our veterans deserve more than just our applause or gratitude; they deserve our help and our commitment to ensuring that they have access to the resources they need to fully reintegrate into civilian life. We urge our fellow Texans to help with this effort. Please visit the Texas Access to Justice Foundation website (tajff.org) to make a donation via the Joe Jamail Endowment for Veteran Legal Services in honor of a service member or veteran in your life.

As veterans ourselves, we're proud of the work of our advocates in serving the legal needs of veterans and their continued effort in ensuring access to justice for all. Legal aid services can help qualified veterans achieve economic security, avoid homelessness and promote stability within their family relationships. The debt owed to our veterans is one that we could never fully repay. Together, we should serve those who first served us.

Nathan L. Hecht is chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas and is a U.S. Navy veteran. Victor A. Flores is president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association and is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps.

CARTOONIST'S TAKE



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Opinion

Safety

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this crisis with an emergency session is that you think the problem will go away — until the next shooting, which we all now know will happen again.

Explore so-called red-flag laws. Use your influence to find a legal means to take guns out of the hands of people who have exhibited behaviors that are a prelude to mass murder. We've heard the concerns about violating the constitutional rights of people who haven't broken a law yet. You're a former attorney general and Texas Supreme Court justice. You're equipped to address those concerns.

Close the background-check loopholes. You've said you want to make it easier for owners who aren't licensed gun dealers to conduct background checks voluntarily before

What does it say about us that active-shooter drills in elementary schools and church-goers who carry guns are among our current so-called solutions?

selling guns in their collection to strangers. Why not make it mandatory — like Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick suggested despite pushback from the NRA. If you were to agree publicly with Patrick, your combined clout could accomplish what might have prevented the Odessa shooting, in which the killer bought his rifle in a private transaction,

aware that a background check at a gun store would have weeded him out.

Enforce the laws already on the books. It has been said, repeatedly, that there already are enough laws. Judging from results, either there aren't enough or the ones we have need to be enforced. Which is it? You need to answer that question, honestly and completely, rather than allow the assertion that "we have enough laws" to go unchallenged. Be clear, transparent, and with a solution.

Require safe storage. Hold owners accountable if guns they didn't store safely are used in crimes.

Have a serious discussion about assault-style rifles. There are solutions short of a ban that could accomplish much. Engage law enforcement on this issue. Officers have to confront this firepower to protect us. Why not set aside money for a voluntary buy-back offer? Why not have a conversation, at least, about finding and enforcing a reasonable magazine limit?

Last but not least — set the tone. You asked Texans for a second term, and Texans obliged. Show them — all of them, not just a voting majority — that they made the right choice.

You know the difference between legal rights and what's right. You can protect our right to own an assault rifle and, at the same time, let it be known that that just because displaying it in public is legal, it isn't appropriate. These weapons are such a threat that police officers must arm themselves in a similar manner.

Governor, we share these potential remedies because like you we want a safer future. We are asking you to lead us to safety from the next mass shooting. Can you do it?

CARTOONIST'S TAKE

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YOUR VIEWS

Can the city solve this mystery?

I've called 311 to report street lights lying on medians for months. No result. Then two calls to the mayor's office. No result. A call to my city rep got me no return call. These damaged lights are on the East Side of town. There must be others in other parts of El Paso. Is there someone who can solve this mystery? No money? Waiting for new lights?

*Jerry Garcia
East El Paso*

El Paso Electric sale needs reviewed

The proposed El Paso Electric sale to any entity should be reviewed in light of PG&E's investor-owned utility operations in California; privatized utility service monopolies serve the interests of Wall Street fat cats seeking a rate of return, not customers.

Libertarian economic arguments that public utilities can be operated better and cheaper than private, for-profit firms are a big lie and proven fallacy, given PG&E's record of negligence, wrongful death of hundreds of people and billions of dollars in property damage leading to that company's bankruptcy and planned power lapses that cripple California's economy.

Investors immediately want to cut corners, defer capital improvement projects and reduce employee pay and benefits in order to maximize investment returns. That is just a matter of fact and industry standard.

The sale of EPE to a private entity should be juxtaposed with a hypothetical sale to the State of Texas so that all stakeholders will be informed regarding Texas' and New Mexico natural gas and electric municipal, commercial and industrial energy consumption trends and best management practices.

Finally, investor-owned utilities values will always reflect the financial values of the private fund managers seeking profit and not necessarily the values of customers who want investments in renewable energy - solar, wind or hydraulic power resources - but will have no meaningful say in such future con-

siderations.

*Michael Smith
Las Cruces, New Mexico*

Mayor disrespects Mexican-American history

Mayor Dee Margo's performance in the recent KVIA-TV Duranguito debate with J.P. Byran revealed his lack of respect for the history and culture of Mexican-Americans, who constitute 83 percent of the city's population. His attitude was reflected in both his body language and his misleading comments and untruths.

Assuming an arrogant tone, Margo was dismissive of Duranguito as the birthplace of El Paso, despite what numerous PhD-level historians have written about that neighborhood. He showed no appreciation for the rich history left behind by Mexicans and other groups in that locality, history that the city should capitalize on to create a dynamic historical/cultural district that would do much more for El Paso's economy than a sports arena.

If Margo and other members of the city council are successful in destroying Duranguito for an arena, they will blow a great opportunity to utilize the best site El Paso has for heritage tourism.

Build the arena someplace else. And have the arena promoters pay for it, not the taxpayers.

This is an outrage. El Paso deserves better leadership.

*Oscar J. Martinez
West El Paso*

Reader disagrees with Times editorial

Regarding your editorial, "The Times wants to foster community discussion," on Nov. 4, no, you want to "control" discussion. How sad for us here in El Paso.

*Derald Smith
Northeast El Paso*

Don't allow hatred to disrupt life

Regarding the re-opening of the Cielo Vista WalMart, it seems that some folks are suffering from "survivors' guilt."

Of course it will be sad to go into the place where such horrors occurred. The question is, do we allow the hatred and evil spewed by that racist to upturn everyone's life? I, for one, believe that those sufferers are entitled to their opinions, but some of us refuse to allow the shooter to totally destroy a way of life.

*Caroline VanTrease
East Central El Paso*

Beto made our country stronger

Thank you, Beto O'Rourke. Your commitment to ending gun violence and uplifting the voices of the victims and families has made the 2020 Presidential Race — and our country — stronger. I look forward to working together in the fight to end gun violence.

*Paul Bacon
Hallandale Beach, FL*

Allow Trump to build the wall

In light of the brutal mass killing of innocent Mormons in near-by northern Mexico, Judge David Briones ought to reconsider his opinion that there is no crisis at the border, and allow President Donald Trump's wall building to continue.

Denying that danger exists along the border demonstrates a thick wall of ignorance. A completed wall might be the only way to prevent mass drug violence from spilling into the United States.

*Paul Hoylen
Deming, New Mexico*

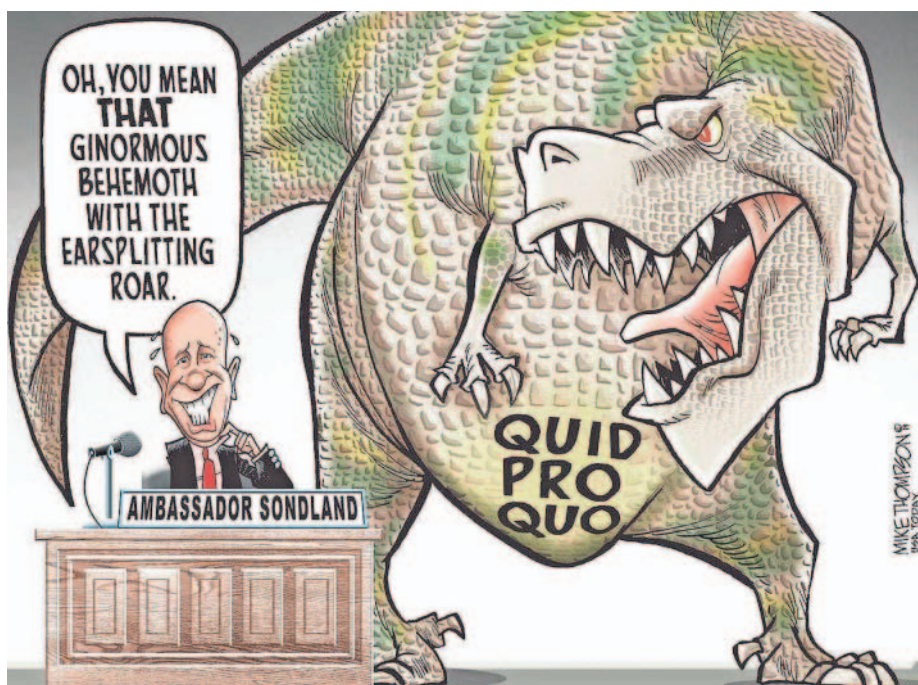
Are school administrators vetted?

Have the parties responsible for hiring the administrators for El Paso Schools every thoroughly vetted these out of town recruits before lavishing them with these over the top salaries that these positions don't warrant?

There always seems to be some hint of wrongdoing hanging over our school system administration hires dating back to Lorenzo Garcia. How soon will Cabrera be bailing? I feel another school tax increase is in the works.

*Robert F. Breton
East El Paso*

CARTOONIST'S TAKE



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