This week, Texas will go into special legislative session in an effort to review and pass legislation that was not passed during the regular session. Governor Greg Abbott has called for the session and highlighted 20 bills, some of which include more laws regulating abortion, land annexation, permits being distributed at a state level rather than local, education vouchers and the bathroom bill.

Many people, especially those outside the Republican Party, have argued that there was no need for the session and claim it was a way for Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick to push forward his bathroom bill. The House didn’t complete its sunset review process in time during the last session, which is the reason the state is going into special session.

"That is a waste of time. It was by pure politics. The lieutenant governor, Dan Patrick, wanted some of his priority bills passed by the House," Rodriguez said. "The bathroom bill, the voucher bill, a tax rollback bill, which is also in special sessions to provide tax reform because the House didn’t support those, he didn’t pass the sunset bill. The one bill that needed to pass, and that’s why we’re having to go back.”

"Sometimes the business of government takes longer than the 140-day biannual session. Texans are of two minds: thank goodness the legislature only meets once every two years for 140 days and too bad they only meet for 140 days," Coronado said. "I just think that the issues are too complicated and there’s not enough time in the regular sessions. Sometimes it is important to have a special session."

Celeste Acevedo, a senior communications studies major and president of the University Democrats, sees this as unfair. She believes there are private interests when it comes to the governor’s agenda.

"Republicans have the majority in the House and the Senate. The Republicans’ priorities weren’t in the right place and I think that it’s dishonest for elected officials to push it into a special session, specifically prolonging this one bill (the bathroom bill), so that way other bills that weren’t prioritized during the regular session couldn’t pass," Acevedo said. 

The governor sets the agenda for what can be reviewed during the session.
Why you should care about Texas legislative session

BY ADRIAN BROADDUS
The Prospector

Beginning this week, Texas legislators will return for a special legislative session in an attempt to pass legislation that was not enacted during the regular session. This special session was called for by Governor Greg Abbott, who is keen on bills regarding abortion, laws, state and local control, public education finance reform and the restrictions on bathroom use for transgender Texans.

Most who stay away from politics would skip over this column or stop reading after the first paragraph because they think, “This doesn’t apply to me, why should I care?” Or, they think these actions are entirely out of their control, so they should sit back and wait until laws are passed.

Although it’s easy to be in the passenger seat during this drive of new legislation that may or may not pass, there’s no reason to sleep on these new acts. In fact, in our border town, most of these bills can greatly affect our livelihood and local laws would be affected. So, it’s actually very important to keep up to speed on these legislative issues.

In fact, what this special session can show the Texas public is the widening separation between state government and local government. Almost half of Abbott’s legislative session derives from proposals to better control local government spending and guidelines. Some journalists throughout Texas, who are extensively covering this session, are using words like “handful” and “crack down” to describe Abbott’s agenda toward local municipalities. From harder penalties in driving laws to permits being granted or denied at the state level, Abbott is calling for more state control over counties in Texas. Nonetheless, it is fueling a growing tension between local rule and state government.

Something that many Texans are advocating for is the proposed bill that will allocate millions in bonuses to teachers, increased funding for education employees’ health plan once retired and better health screenings for women, test individuals for HIV/AIDS and give accessibility to birth control. Also on the controversial side, SB 6 has brought up a lot of controversy not only on the state level, but also on the national level. SB 6 or “the bathroom bill” will regulate public restroom use for transgender individuals. The bill will require those individuals to use the bathroom that corresponds with their biological sex and not their gender identity.

Instead of getting into the debate on abortion and whether taxpayers should have to pay for these clinics, or the debate on whether transgender individuals should be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice, the most fundamental point to make about this is the fact that this bill is on the table, and if you live in Texas, you should care.

Contrary to popular belief, these bills do not just affect the state level, but can affect anyone who lives in Texas and who is also trying to have a national influence. One who depends on birth control may have less accessibility to buy birth control due to SB 8’s restrictions. One who is a transgender individual will have to resort to using a bathroom of their biological sex instead of going to the restroom of their choice, which could greatly affect the mental health or overall well-being of a transgender individual who is at UTEP. These are all issues that hit home, and even can affect us on a campus level.

This is the time to stop and think, “how will this affect us on campus?” So get out, start a protest, advocate for one or the other—the bottom line is, simply care about your state’s political standing.

#AdrianBroaddus on Twitter @adrianbroaddus

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Rodriguez agrees with Acevedo on the private interests of the governor and lieutenant governor with the bills that would be addressed.

"These are bills frankly that are motivated by politics for both him and the Lt. Gov. Patrick. These bills are right-wing, conservative voter-based bills that they want to impose their base of voters with," Rodriguez said regarding the agenda that was set.

One of the key issues that many will be looking at is abortion. The state of Texas already has abortion laws in place, but three separate measures, including SB8, which relate to abortion, are set to come up in efforts to place more restrictions on the procedure. Senate Bill 8 bans partial-birth abortions and restricts fetal tissue donations.

During his recent State of the State address, Gov. Abbott told lawmakers he wanted a bill that would prohibit cities and counties from giving taxpayer dollars to abortion providers.

Rodriguez is in agreement with any of the bills relating to abortion. "I just don't think the Democratic Party will be fighting the measures as they impose on women's rights."

"They're imposing more restrictions on women's abilities to choose to abortion. "'Do you have to go into (funding) those in that stuff, why does your money being pro life. If you don't believe on abortion."

"Tim for it. It's pretty much one of the main principles of the party, being pro life. If you don't believe in that stuff, who does your money have to go into funding those places," Sanchez said.

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Along with the restrictions and regulations comes defending of clinics that provided health screenings for women, cancer screenings, cervical screenings, HIV/AIDS testing, family planning and access to free birth control.

The state in the last two sessions, 2013, 2015, cut back on the women's health program funding. Women who used to go to a lot of those clinics can't do it anymore because a lot of those clinics closed and they kept Planned Parenthood from being involved in operating some of these clinics," Rodriguez said. "I'll legally because Planned Parenthood does abortions, but these clinics that we're talking about for low-income women are clinics that provide no abortions, but provide health services."

The bill that arguably stirred the most controversy during the regular legislative session was SB6, better known as the "bathroom bill" and it is being revisited as one of the key items on the governor's agenda. When first presented, it was received with a widespread disapproval from large advocacy groups.

SB6 prohibits transgender people from using public bathrooms, including schools, that match their gender identity and requires them to use facilities that correspond to their biological gender.

"The entire country is going to be watching what the legislature will be doing. There's a lot of politicking going on because the lieutenant governor might have other political aspirations and the governor certainly wants to be reelected, so we'll have to wait and see how that plays out," Coronado said.

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O’Rourke takes a different approach to fundraising

BY EDDIE VELAZQUEZ
The Prospector

Before announcing his bid for a U.S. Senate seat in 2018, El Paso Democratic Congressman Beto O’Rourke and fellow Democratic representative from California, Ro Khanna, introduced the No-PAC Act on March 27. “The law is supposed to prevent all congressional candidates from inflating their campaign budgets with money provided by political action committees (PACs). According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the contributions these committees have provided have been significant after the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court ruling. In the congressional election of 2014, PACs contributed approximately $475 million to candidates, and about one-third of total funds to House candidates. In the case of O’Rourke’s opponent, current Texas Senator Ted Cruz, PACs have contributed $1,137,709 to his campaign (7 percent) over the course of the last five years, according to that same report.

“There is too much money in politics generally, and specifically corporations have too much sway over the laws that are made, and where money and resources go in this country,” O’Rourke said. “One of the ways that they influence that is through PAC contributions, so it allows them to concentrate a lot of money to a number of candidates and get whatever it is that they are looking for.”

O’Rourke, 44, first ventured into politics in 2004 as a member of the El Paso City Council and climbed up the political ladder in 2012 to occupy a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving Texas’ 16th Congressional District.

As has become emblematic of his political persona, O’Rourke announced on a Facebook post that his campaign had raised $2.1 million during the second quarter of the year, encompassing April, May and June. “The congressional fundraising effort during the second quarter is set to beat that of the current incumbent Cruz. Cruz is scheduled to report $8.1 million raised in the second quarter, as the Federal Election Commission reports are due at the end of July.”

O’Rourke also said that the money came from 46,574 individual donations. That means every donation comes at an average of $44, with 81 percent of the money coming from his home state of Texas.

“I’m not waiting for that (No-PAC Act) to pass, I’m running this campaign as if that were a law, not taking any PAC money,” O’Rourke said.

The congressman said that significant national issues have been affected because of the influence of those PACs.

“Immigration reforms are a great example,” O’Rourke said. “People talk about immigration reform all the time, for decades and it hasn’t come together in part because it is not a priority to Congress. PACs, which are focused on ensuring profitability, changes to policy that benefit them and less about what is in the public interest.”

During a fundraising event for O’Rourke’s campaign at Tricky Falls on Saturday, July 15, County Commissioner David Stout said O’Rourke’s effort was an “impressive feat.”

“PAC money can sometimes be considered as dark money. You don’t know where it is coming from and I definitely think there should be a campaign finance reform in this country,” Stout said. “He is leading the way on making that change and I think it is very respectable, and I certainly hope that he continues to raise the amount of money that he has been raising.”

O’Rourke is optimistic about the rate at which these grassroots-style donations are coming at, despite facing an opponent with a national fundraising base.

“It means people decide, ‘we are going to be part of this effort, we are going to drive this effort,’ ” he said. “And I love that it is people doing it with 20 bucks, 50 bucks, sometimes more at a time, deciding that this is possible and they are gonna make it happen.”

He also attributes some of his success to Texans wanting a change at the national Senate level.

“This is a really formidable opponent, but I think part of what has made him formidable is the frustration that so many Texans have,” O’Rourke said.

“This guy is in Iowa campaigning for president, he was in New Hampshire, he was in Nevada, he wasn’t in El Paso, he wasn’t in Lubbock, he wasn’t in Dal- las, he wasn’t focused on the needs of the state. I think people are responding to that, and I think that is what partly explains our success so far.”

At the state level, O’Rourke is not sure what the upcoming special session will bring, however he says that it is not an opportunity to raise the minimum wage and is fulfilling to you and me.

“Many of the state agencies that help the state with the help of San Antonio-based law firm Garza Golando and Moran PLLC. However, when asked for comment, Mayor Donald ‘Dee’ Margo said he had no updates at this time.

“As part of this special campaign, O’Rourke wants to focus on canvassing the state. His schedule for July included trips to Austin, El Paso and Canyon. “Wherever I go in the state, folks are focused on jobs and they wanna know that we are gonna fight for them to be competitive by getting a college education,” O’Rourke said. “If that is what you need to do that, what it takes, by making sure that it is affordable.”

He also highlighted the importance of serving people with training and certifications in the case of those without a college education.

“We wanna make sure that if you have a skill, you can use to get a job that pays above living wage and is fulfilling to you that there is the connection to the certificate or the vocational training or the apprenticeships that allow you to do that.”

O’Rourke is also concerned with student debt in El Paso, especially after a tuition raise has been put into effect. He proposed an idea to attract workers back to El Paso with the promise of a lighter student debt.

“If you do take on debt to finish your education, as I did when I went to college, and you are willing to work in an in-demand profession in an underserved community— and El Paso meets that criteria in many different areas—then we have to be a little better and more effective at wiping that debt clean in order to bring back that talent to the communities where it needs to be,” he said.

The spirit of the congressman’s cause was embodied at the concert venue, with people from all ages flooding in to see for- mer At The Drive-In guitarist Jim Ward, and some of Ward’s original material performed covers of popular songs such as “I Fought the Law” by The Crickets, and some of Ward’s original material from his country project Steepscar such as “Tencen Downs.”

“We are here to support Beto, that is a simple concept,” Ward said. “I hope we can entertain you tonight.”

Follow Eddie Velazquez on Twitter @zvelazquez

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The Prospector
JULY 18, 2017
The only comedic relief came from Sean Diaz, who played the boisterous Juan De Olitte, a conquistador from Spain in the mid-1500s. He had a short scene where he wouldn’t stay still and went off on a tangent as he was getting his portrait painted by an artist. One of the most entertaining scenes of the night was during the time of the Mestizos. It featured a dance battle turned sword fight between Jose (Erick Canales) and the father of the girl he wished to marry, played by Diego Parada. After the battle, the father blesses the marriage and we see the wedding happen in the background of the folklórico (a Mexican folk dance) dancers. Canales and Parada delivered the most thrilling fight scene of the night in this scene.

Out of all the different dances performed, the folklórico was the most visually pleasing as they had the brightest and largest costumes. All of the dancers were graceful in their movements and the females even balanced bottles on their heads while dancing, while the men were incredibly charming and never missed a beat. Costumes were a standout element of the show. The play incorporated clothes from over 400 years of history. The elements’ costumes were grand indeed.

The show’s performances seemed to come back stronger in the second act, as well as the choreography. El Paso history is told through a love story over the ages. The story is told in a way as unique as the city itself. This production featured a mix of Spanish dialogue as well as songs in both English and Spanish.

Erick Canales was the star of the show. He played the male lead over the course of El Paso’s history. He was his vocal talent that carried his performances.

The transition in between scenes consisted of dancers coming out in costumes and doing choreography based on the era the story was transitioning into. A couple of times they used the dancers to not only represent the cultural change, but to help move the main plot along in the background, montage style.

The musical features dance numbers that narrate El Paso’s extensive history.
David Blaine to appear at the Plaza

BY ANDRES GALLEGOS
The Prospector

He is only interested in pushing the limits of his profession. Blaine’s astounding tricks are proof of both his passion and talent. Just as he holds no special inclination for tricks, Blaine performs for and astonishes all kind of people. From prison inmates to Harrison Ford, Blaine promotes a closeness when it comes to dealing with his audience. His close-and-personal style makes his work believable. The late Kambo Sike, who was an MMA fighter, once punched him in the stomach, Jada Pinkett Smith removed an ice pick from his hand, and Harrison Ford kicked him out his house when he found his playing card inside an orange. Blaine is more than just a party magician who digs a coin out from inside a child’s ear. He is aonce in a lifetime magician who deserves attention and earns his applause.

Tickets for his performance range from $50 to $90 and may be purchased at www.ticketmaster.com.

special to the prospector

Does a rapper’s endorsement destroy their integrity?
BY ADRIAN BROADDUS
The Prospector

From former Denver Bron- cos quarterback Peyton Manning talking about Papa John’s being the best pizza on the planet to actor Matthew McCo- naughy starring in commercials for Lincoln, celebrity en- dorsements flood today’s advertisements. Musicians and artists—particularly rappers—have recently become the en- tertainers who are getting a lot of attention in the commercial market. The juxtaposition of having these rappers, who front a hard outer shell, yet endorse vari- ous different brands, can be paralleled with the rise of popularity of hip-hop into radio music.

It’s difficult to pinpoint what hip-hop artists forwarded those endorsements, but nonetheless, they have always been brands or commercials in their sort of field. For example, Kendrick Lamar’s sneaker collaboration and endorse- ment with Reebok, which, in fact, had an anti-gang violence message behind the ad campaign. Up until now, rappers had never really pushed the boundaries of consumerism and were not really shown in every- day commercials for things like candy, snacks, drinks or fast food. However, now it seems that the advertising mar- keters from more day-to-day large com- panies are collaborating with rappers as they did in the early 2000s with both big names and newer artists. It is odd to see a rapper who is a Soundcloud artist that gives away music for free, go off and sell his or her name for endorsements.

The most surprising one is Vince Staples, who is currently starring in dif- ferent Sprite commercials. If you know Staples, the rapper out of Long Beach, Calif., you know he’s against doing just about anything that could be perceived as corny. He’s released over five mixtapes independently before signing to Def Jam, which was a surprise on its own since he was very anti-label on the come up. Now, Staples is leading the way among five other rappers in Sprite endorse- ments. Even though he officially signed with the company at the top of the sum- mer, Sprite featured Staples last year on a short internet bit to talk about music. One could perceive it as an ironic mar- keting scheme since Staples has spoken about it in such an oblique way. In the commercial, he makes no effort to look like he’s enjoying Sprite, make Sprite look appealing or make the commercial appealing, which makes the ad humor- ous. At the end he even says, “Product is important, make sure they see that logo right there (pointing at the Sprite can). Sprite! The commercials over.”

“Some of Staples’ fans went onto Twit- ter and took shots at the rapper, saying things like he’s “sold out” or that he’s “a puppet for a corporation.” Whether he truly “sold out” to Sprite or not, it is defi- nitely contrary to the artist’s behavior to do something like this. But Staples isn’t the only one. In fact, Sprite is notorious for getting famous rap- pers in the game as they did with Drake in the early 2010s, but this time around, they chose to bring up-and-coming art- ists on their team. This summer, Sprite signed Lil Yachty, T.R.A.M., Vic Mensa, Kamaiyah and Kap G—all rappers who are gaining popularity entering the hip-hop world. Sprite made a deal to cover its cans and bottles with the respective artists’ lyrics. Sprite’s movement is called “Summer Sprite Cold Lyrics Series,” and while in the previous years Sprite had used older artists’ lyrics, this initiative is focusing on future rappers in the game.

Another independently released rap- per who’s been all over commercials is Chance the Rapper with Kit Kat choco- late bars. The rapper has made his three solo projects free to the public and has become infamous for his recent work, and he did a commercial with Kit Kat in 2016.

When the topic of collaboration comes into play it becomes more of a widely accepted culture since the artist is usu- ally given more free rein and freedom on creating the product, whereas in a com- mercial, the artist usually has to adhere to a script, directors and writers behind the scenes.

Now what do all these rapper endorse- ments mean? Should any music fan care what a rapper does in his off time? Why are fans so adamant about this being a detriment to the integrity of music, when the artist is probably making more off commercials and endorsing brands than actual albums sales? Short answer, it depends. When artists who have already made it, maybe even hundreds of millions, seeing them in a commercial feels fabricated and cheesy at times.

One thing is for certain, Sprite’s new at- tempt to get these up-and-coming artists on board has definitely pumped up the popularity for both the company and the artist, who are getting equal exposure.
Downtown Fitness Saturdays promote health

By Mike Flores

Every Saturday from July 8 to October 21, Fit City Gym and trainer Walter Cupa are hosting Downtown Fitness Saturdays for the El Paso community at the San Jacinto Plaza from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. There is no charge and all ages are welcome to join.

Downtown Fitness Saturdays is being run by local fitness, yoga, timba and Zumba instructors. No equipment or weights are needed for the workouts, it’s strictly body callisthenic movements and body weight exercises.

Trainer Walter Cupa is holding free workout sessions every Saturday downtown this summer from July 8 through October 21.

Although Cupa became a certified personal trainer seven years ago, he has always wished to create a free workout event for the community. He is aware that a lot of people might not have the funds to pay for a monthly gym membership or be able to pay for a personal trainer, or that many people do not know where to get started, so he wants to help people out without making them have to pay to be in shape.

This year, the local businesses and sponsors for Fitness Saturdays are Fit City Gym, El Paso Downtown Management District, Body Hero Gym and Power Hour Pre-Workout.

When Cupa first got certified to be a trainer, he started offering boot camps outdoors because he didn’t have a place to train people. However, with time, his group kept growing and growing. Cupa didn’t want to lose the progress he had made, so he saved up money to have a place to keep training people in the winter. He rented out a downtown gym called the Lion’s Den.

As Cupa’s business picked up, he made his way to other gyms, such as Planet Fitness, where he would do TV segments. That’s when his following grew and the possibility of running a downtown event was finally achievable in Cupa’s mind.

Cupa’s right-hand man for Fitness Saturdays is his former trainee David Claudio, who has won multiple first-place prizes at competitions and is opening up his own gym, Body Hero, on the Westside. Claudio has accomplished all of this despite the fact that he has to deal with a heart issue foreseeing that his aortic valve might rupture at anytime.

The main goal for participants of Fitness Saturdays is to keep in shape and start a change in the perception of how El Paso is looked upon.

“This was one of the fittest cities in the United States, I think we were second. And I got invited to do a TV segment in San Diego last year for the CW, because we were one of the fittest cities,” Cupa said. “Since San Diego is one of the fittest cities, we spoke about that and what it’s going to take to keep the Latino community fit.”

The first hour of Fitness Saturdays, from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., consists of a lot of the workout routines that revolve around plyometrics, which concentrate on explosiveness, movements, coordination and speed. Then, the second hour of the workout is the yoga segment.

“It’s sunrise yoga. The buildings downtown cover the sun, so by the time we are finishing at 9, the sun is starting to rise and everyone ends up on the grass and wakes up to the sunrise,” Cupa said.

Mike Flores may be reached at theprospectordaily.ent@gmail.com.
Hernandez paves the way for the offense

The Miners’ success on offense propelled the team to an unexpected seven-win season and first bowl appearance since 2010, thanks to seven 200-plus yard rushing games and four 300-plus total yard games.

Hernandez is hoping that this season, his final one, will be like his first when the team reached the coveted six-plus win mark needed for a bowl opportunity. “I feel like my freshman season and this season coming up are going to be very alike, especially the way that our schedules were set up,” Hernandez said. “My freshman year, when we did go to a bowl game, we have seven away games and only five home games, exactly what we have this year, and we were underdogs in almost every game that we played and nobody thought we were going to have a good season.”

This year, he sees a lot of similarities between now and the 2013 team. “We came out and won seven of those 12 and won road games that got us to that bowl game, and I think this season is going to be very similar to that year and especially because the way these guys have been training, we always step up to adversity and that’s exactly what this year is, adversity and I feel like we will rise above and have a very good season this year, even though a lot of people don’t think we will.”

UTEP has only appeared in two bowl games since 2005 and has not won one since defeating Ole Miss 14-7 in the 1967 Sun Bowl. Hernandez and the Miners open the 2017 campaign at Oklahoma on Sept. 2 (1:30 p.m. MT), followed by their first home contest and Conference USA opener against Rice on Sept. 9 (6 p.m.).

NINA TITOVETS / THE PROSPECTOR

Hernandez and his offensive line allowed the fewest sacks in Conference USA last year.