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Sunny, High 71, Low 46

Super long lines on Super Tuesday

In some places, voters had to wait for hours in order to cast their ballots

By Brian Chasnoff, Taylor Goldenstein and Scott Hoffstein
STAFF WRITERS

Across Texas, patience was required to vote on election day, as long lines led to long waits at the polls.

In Bexar County, officials attributed the delays to technical glitches and confusion over voting rules.

"We had people going back to the polls and wanting to cancel their early voting ballot because the candidate they voted for in early voting had just dropped

out," Bexar County Elections Administrator Joaquin Gallon said. "That occurred in a number of our poll sites. That threw judges for a loop."

This week, former Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Ind., and Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota both left the Democratic presidential race with a day of one another. Changing early votes after a candidate drops out is not allowed in Texas.

Another source of delay: people who tried to register to vote on election day. That's also not allowed in Texas.

In addition, mix-ups with new

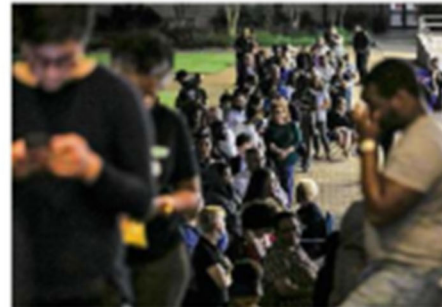
▶ Check out final results and who's up — or not — on page A9

printers caused snarls of voter traffic at about 50 local polling sites.

"In the morning, there was a lot of confusion," Gallon said. "When they got there, they had just plugged things into the wrong printer port."

The waits were even worse in other urban centers. Voters in the state's largest counties stood in line for hours after polls closed at 7 p.m., waiting for their chance to cast a ballot.

Under state law, anyone who has gotten in line by the time the polls close must be allowed to



Although the polls closed at 7 p.m., voters still were waiting in line at 7:55 p.m. at Texas Southern University in Houston. *Jim Shipley / Staff photographer*

Progressives made progress in the primaries

By Benjamin Wiseman
WASH. POST COLUMNIST

WASHINGTON — She didn't win the election. But Jessica Cisneros, a 26-year-old Laredo immigration attorney, had a message for moderate Democrats like U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, who beat her by 3,000 votes in the hardest-fought campaign of his 15-year congressional career: "This is just the beginning."

"We are going to keep fighting to create a more

progressive and accountable Democratic Party this year," Cisneros said in her concession speech Wednesday. "The fact that we were able to get within 3,000 points just shows that there's so many people out there that share the same ideas and beliefs as we do."

That's the message progressives up and down the ballot in Texas sent Tuesday.

Although they largely fell short Super Tuesday, they outperformed on 46



Supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination for president cheer at a Super Tuesday watch party in Austin. *Tom Jacky / New York Times*

Ex-S. San officials tout charter schools

By Ashley McBride
STAFF WRITER

Several former leaders of South San Antonio Independent School District, which was disrupted by trustee infighting last year and now faces a state investigation, have joined charter school start-ups that want to open campuses in the district's backyard.

Three proposals to open schools on the South and West sides starting in 2021 are among the latest batch of charter applications an-

der review by the Texas Education Agency.

Two of the proposals are being led by former board members and a former South San superintendent, who has insisted they're not trying to undercut the district they once served.

Charter schools are expanding in Bexar County and compete for students and state funding with traditional school districts and, increasingly, with each other.

South San has struggled with enrollment de-

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CORONAVIRUS



Checkers by Tom Jacky / Staff photographer

Hand-sanitizing wipes are available as participants sign up and prepare exhibits at the AWP Conference and Bookfair, the largest literary conference in North America, at the Convention Center.

Illness is sending shivers through convention-goers

Some people are deciding not to come to the city

By Jim Kliest and Randy Diamond
STAFF WRITERS

Thousands of attendees and presenters may stay away from a big literary conference this week in San Antonio because of coronavirus concerns.

About 10,000 writers, editors, publishers and educators were expected to attend the AWP Conference and Bookfair, the largest literary conference in North America, which runs through Saturday at the Convention Center.

About 40 percent decided not to come, said Cynthia Sherman, executive co-director of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, a national organization dedicated to advancing the art of writing.



Convention participants are reminded that it might be better to just nod and smile instead of shaking hands.

"We always knew that these would be people who made the decision not to come, and we support each individual choice," she said. "We wish we didn't have to deal with a pandemic. It's new for all of us."

She expects attendance will be between 5,000 and 7,500.

They'll be arriving in a city that made national news this week when Mayor Ron Nirenberg declared a

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FROM THE COVER

S. SAN

From page A1

clines and fiercely debated a 2007 board decision to close schools to cut costs — and a 2009 decision to spend the money to reopen them.

Former trustees Angilina Oteguin, Edward Mungia and Edda Flores now are on the board of the 70s Academy, which wants to open in the 7627 ZIP code in fall 2023 and recruit elementary-aged students in the Edgewood, Southside and South San ISDs.

Former Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra, meanwhile, is on the board of Royal Public Schools, which hopes to open four campuses targeting families in Southside, Harlandale and South San ISDs to eventually serve students at all grade levels.

The 70s Academy would be led by Nadia Balasubramanian as superintendent. Oteguin, who was president of the South San board until losing a re-election bid in 2016, said she met him when he interviewed for the superintendent position at South San that year.

When Balasubramanian asked her to join the charter's board, she was eager to contribute, she said.

"I'm not opposed to charter schools. I advocate for kids and if charter schools were opening up (while I was board president), I think that was a good thing because it challenged the school district to up their game," she said. "When I was approached, I was more than happy to help our kids excel, not only in the areas of STAAR testing but the whole child."

Oteguin said she helped recruit Mungia and Flores to the 70s board.

Mungia was appointed as a South San trustee in January 2008 to fill a vacant seat and lost the election for it that November, but has

continued to work with educational organizations, including SA HSE, which promotes equity in education.

"I'm not here to attack any school district," Mungia said. "At the end of the day, even though the districts are separated and you have charters all over the place, it's still San Antonio. We have the same kids and families and need to work together."

The school, if it's approved, will emphasize seven "virtues": character, compassion, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and citizenship.

The application pointed to four failing schools in Edgewood ISD as evidence of the need for another option for parents.

Two charter schools, EHA Monterey Park Academy and KIPP Via Miando Dual Language Academy, also are in the area. The KIPP school received an F grade under the TIA accountability system last year.

The new school would open with pre-K through second grade and add one grade in subsequent years through fifth grade, eventually enrolling 1,600 students. Balasubramanian previously worked for Mansor Independent School District as the director of school improvement and accountability.

Saavedra, the Houston ISD superintendent from 2005 to 2009, ran South San from 2004 to 2008. He said he had been advising Royal Public School's CEO, Sorel Tartin, for about a year when Tartin asked him to join the charter's board.

Years ago, Tartin founded Harmony Public Schools, now an established charter network with several campuses in San Antonio and across the state.

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Former South San President Angilina Oteguin and Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra now are on the boards of charter schools.

ter. My thinking on that is, I've always felt that successful charters are good options for parents to consider," Saavedra said. "I think Sorel will be able to establish one of these highly successful charters here in San Antonio and he has a successful track record through Harmony."

Royal plans a curriculum focused on science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, math and social-emotional learning and will incorporate a project-based learning model, its application states.

It wants to start with an elementary school inside the attendance boundaries for Gallardo Elementary School in Southside ISD. At full capacity, the network would enroll 2,328 students in four campuses, the application states.

Last year, the State Board of Education rejected Royal Public Schools' application to open schools in Houston and Austin.

Oteguin and Flores were among trustees who voted to close schools in South San under Saavedra's recommendation. An elec-

tion in 2008 ousted trustees and produced a new board majority that reopened the schools the following year.

South San's current board president, Gilbert Rodriguez, points to that record as the reason his former colleagues have joined charter schools and said he viewed their choice as an effort to undermine the district.

"It's definitely disappointing, given that these board members advocated for public schools at one point," Rodriguez said. "We're going to press forward. We're going to compete and we're going to advocate for South San Antonio Independent School District and we're going to fight for our identity."

Flores was elected to the South San board in 2006 and resigned last fall to protest the treatment of Alexander Flores, the new superintendent, by Rodriguez and others in the board majority.

"I know the optics do not look good for these board members coming out of a public school district now trying to start a charter

ing. It would serve the 7626, 7624 and 7623 ZIP codes and be located within the attendance boundaries of McAuliffe Middle School in Southwest ISD.

If approved, the school would open with pre-K through first grade and increase by one grade each year, serving 720 students at full capacity.

Prehade would be led by superintendent Lauren Lewis, a fellow with an organization called Building Excellent Schools that trains leaders to start charter schools.

Lewis also applied for a charter in 2016. The TEA rejected that proposal, for a campus in the 7820 or 7823 ZIP codes within San Antonio ISD.

Silicon Hill Academy Charter School has applied to build a campus in Austin in 2021, and to expand to San Antonio in 2024, its application says.

The TEA will vet the applications using external reviewers then interview applicants in the summer. Its approval is subject to a possible veto by the State Board of Education before the charters are awarded in August.

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By Ashley McBride *STAFF WRITER*



Staff file photo

Former South San President Angelina Osteguín and Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra now are on the boards of charter schools.

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Three proposals to open schools on the South and West sides starting in 2021 are among the latest batch of charter applications under review by the Texas Education Agency.

Two of the proposals are being helped along by former board members and a former South San superintendent, who has insisted they're not trying to undercut the district they once served.

Charter schools are expanding in Bexar County and compete for students and state funding with traditional school districts and, increasingly, with each other.

South San has struggled with enrollment declines and fiercely debated a 2017 board decision to close schools to cut costs — and a 2019 decision to spend the money to reopen them.

Former trustees Angelina Osteguín, Edward Mungia and Elda Flores now are on the board of the 7Cs Academy, which wants to open in the 78227 ZIP code in fall 2021 and recruit elementary-aged students in the Edgewood, Southside and South San ISDs.

Former Superintendent Abelardo Saavedra, meanwhile, is on the board of Royal Public Schools, which hopes to open four campuses targeting families in Southside, Harlandale and South San ISDs to eventually serve students at all grade levels.

The 7Cs Academy would be led by Nathan Balasubramanian as superintendent. Osteguín, who was president of the South San board until losing a re-election bid in 2018, said she met him when he interviewed for the superintendent position at South San that year.

When Balasubramanian asked her to join the charter's board, she was eager to contribute, she said.

"I'm not opposed to charter schools. I advocate for kids and if charter schools were opening up (while I was board president), I think that was a good thing because it challenged the school district to up their game," she said. "When I was approached, I was more than happy to help our kids excel, not only in the areas of STAAR testing but the whole child."

Osteguín said she helped recruit Mungia and Flores to the 7Cs board.

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Saavedra, the Houston ISD superintendent from 2005 to 2009, ran South San from 2014 to 2018. He said he had been advising Royal Public School's CEO, Soner Tarim, for about a year when Tarim asked him to join the charter's board.

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"I know the optics do not look good for three board members coming out of a public school district now trying to start a charter school. But it's not the optics I'm concerned about. It's the whole child that I'm concerned about and an advocate for," Elda Flores said.

Also applying for a charter this year is Prelude Preparatory Charter School, which wants to open a K-8 campus focused on academics and high expectations, civic education and social and emotional learning. It would serve the 78242, 78224 and 78211 ZIP codes and be located within the attendance boundaries of McAuliffe Middle School in Southwest ISD.

McBride, A. (2020, March 5). Ex-S. San officials tout charter schools. San Antonio Express-News, pp. A1, A9.

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