



THE INSIDER

(HERE ARE YOUR FIVE INSIGHTS FOR THE MONTH)

HAR Governmental Affairs E-Newsletter

June 2016—Vol. 5

HAR Takes to the Hill for Productive Talks with Lawmakers

Over two exciting and fast-paced days, 70 members of the Houston Association of REALTORS® visited with 10 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and two members of the U.S. Senate and advocated for REALTOR® issues. In addition to the office visits, breakfast meetings with our members of Congress were held at Tortilla Coast on May 11 and 12. Over the two day period, we were very pleased to have Representatives Kevin Brady, Al Green, Gene Green, Sheila Jackson Lee, Pete Olson, Ted Poe, Brian Babin and Randy Weber join us for breakfast and discuss our issues. We had the wonderful opportunity to meet with Chairman Michael McCaul in his committee room on Capitol Hill. Congressman Culberson hosted us in his Capitol office for a morning visit. The afternoon of May 11, Texas REALTORS® gathered in the Hart Senate Office Building for back-to-back meetings with Senators John Cornyn and the staff of Ted Cruz. These annual visits give members of Congress an opportunity to listen to the concerns of REALTORS® in their districts and recognize their opinions and perspectives to help shape important laws and policies. [Click here to view the 2016 NAR Legislative Meetings Talking Points.](#)



Congressman Gene Green (TX-29) reviews REALTOR® legislative talking points with Federal Political Coordinator Carlos Garcia.



House Ways & Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (TX-08) receives a warm welcome from Federal Political Coordinator Vicki Fullerton and HAR Chairman Mario Arriaga at Tortilla Coast.



[Click here to view the 2016 NAR Legislative Meetings Talking Points.](#)

U.S. Senator John Cornyn speaks to Texas REALTORS® in the Hart Senate Office Building (Left and below).



HAR Chairman Mario Arriaga pictured with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18) and FPC Jo Ann Stevens.

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May 2016 Congressional Visits Photo Gallery



Congressman Randy Weber (TX-14) with his Federal Political Coordinator Danny Frank.



Congressman Pete Olson (TX-22) with HAR Board Member Jennifer Wauhob and HAR Chairman Mario Arriaga.



Congressman Ted Poe (TX-02) with HAR Board Member Kenya Burrell and Federal Political Coordinator Delora Wilkinson.



Congressman Al Green (TX-09) being introduced at the HAR Tortilla Coast breakfast by his Federal Political Coordinator Shad Bogany.



Jason Wright, State Field Director for Senator Ted Cruz, speaks to Texas REALTORS® in the Hart Senate Office Building.



Congressman John Culberson (TX-07) receives briefing by his Federal Political Coordinator John Nichols and meets with HAR members in his Capitol Hill office.



Chairman Michael McCaul (TX-10) meets with members of the Austin and Houston Boards of REALTORS® in the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee room.

May 24 Primary Run-Off Election Results

The story of the night was low voter turnout across the state. With no draw at the top of the ticket, turnout fell by 87% from the primaries. In other words, roughly 7 out of 8 voters did not return for the runoff. By party, Republican turnout was less than 3%, Democratic turnout was about 1.5%. The balance of power in the Texas House, which has been a running theme for several elections, has not shifted. The composition of the 85th Texas Legislature is nearly determined after the primary run-offs.

May 24 Run-Off Election Results

Texas House of Representatives District 18

R	Ernest Bailes 	7,554 votes	67.4%
R	Keith Strahan	3,650 votes	32.6%

Texas House of Representatives District 27

D	Ron Reynolds* 	2,056 votes	52.9%
D	Angelique Bartholomew	1,830 votes	47.1%

Texas House of Representatives District 128

R	Briscoe Cain	3,045 votes	50.2%
R	Wayne Smith* 	3,022 votes	49.8%

Texas House of Representatives District 139

D	Jarvis D. Johnson	1,550 votes	53.0%
D	Kimberly Willis	1,372 votes	47.0%

Texas Railroad Commission

R	Wayne Christian	192,599 votes	50.9%
R	Gary Gates	185,887 votes	49.1%

 Indicates HAR Recommended Candidate

* Indicates Incumbent



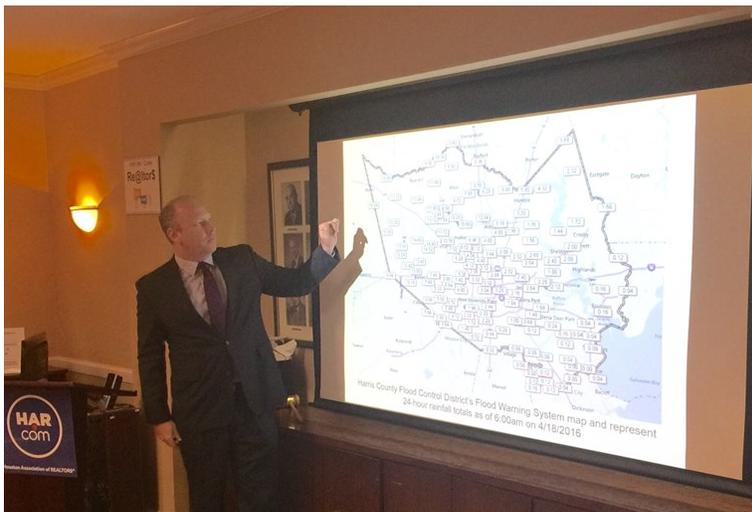
Governmental Affairs Advisory Group Volunteers Receive Briefing on Tax Day Flood Impact for Greater Houston Area and Brainstorm Future Mitigation Plans

Last month, over 20 REALTOR® volunteers met with various stakeholders across multiple levels of government to discuss the current status of the region in regards to flood recovery. Additional discussion was held to determine the development of long-term flood mitigation solutions. REALTORS® needed to be a part of the conversation to speak on behalf of homeowners and business owners. It has only been a few weeks since the 2016 Tax Day flood struck the Greater Houston area. The April 18 floods had a dramatic impact on our entire region. Over 3,700 homes were damaged in Harris County, with some flooding for the second, third or fourth time.



(GAAG Co-Chairs Ray Wade and Ed Wolff pictured here with representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Small Business Administration, Harris County Engineer John Blount, Harris County Flood Control District Executive Director Mike Talbott and City of Houston Director of Government Relations Bill Kelly.)

The City of Houston's new Director of Government Relations Bill Kelly provided a summary presentation on the City of Houston's actions in response to the April 18th rain event. He assured the group that the City is coordinating with multiple stakeholders and now, under the new leadership of recently appointed "flood czar," former city councilmember Steve Costello will lead the charge of planning the City's future flood mitigation efforts. Costello will report directly to the mayor and will have the sole responsibility of developing and implementing strategies that will improve drainage and reduce the risk of flooding.



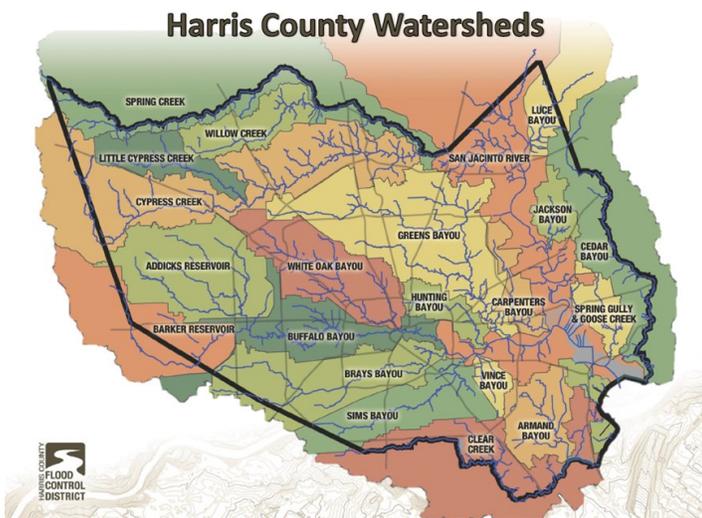
(City of Houston Director of Government Relations Bill Kelly showing the 24-hour rainfall totals per data given from the Harris County Flood Control District's map on Monday, April 18, 2016.)

Harris County Engineer John Blount was next on the agenda and provided a status report on the county's flood mitigation efforts. A call center was established within 72 hours of the flood. There were 3,710 damaged structures throughout the county: 2,348 were outside the floodplain (free, general permits were mailed within 4 hours of Harris County Commissioners Court authorization) and 1,362 homes within the 100 year floodplain required in-home substantial damage inspections. These inspections were at a 90% completion rate as of May 6. One of the biggest concerns raised by Mr. Blount was that a large number of homeowners in Harris County do not have flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). On average in the United States, less than 36% of those that should have National Flood Insurance Program insurance carry it through five years after their home purchase. Many homeowners believe that if their house is not in a floodplain, they do not need to buy flood insurance. In fact, 63.3% of houses that flooded in the Tax Day disaster were outside the 100 year floodplain. The bottom line is if you live in Harris County, you need flood insurance. Mr. Blount finished his presentation by leaving the REALTORS® with this charge: they need to educate, inform and advise their clients and colleagues on the importance of having flood insurance when purchasing a new home.



(Harris County Engineer John Blount showing the 12 hour peak rainfall frequency during the April 18 flood event at the May 6 GAAG meeting.)

Harris County Flood Control District Executive Director Mike Talbott gave the group an evaluation of community flood standards and how to best understand our region's flooding patterns. He presented information on the area's natural channels, natural floodplains, and the total drainage network. The evolution of community standards provided a historical background on how floodplain maps are seen today.



(Harris County Flood Control District Map of area Watersheds, which is where land separates waters flowing to different rivers and basins.)

(Mr. Talbott urged his City and County counterparts to continue working together in order to accomplish an overall flood mitigation strategy for the region.)



Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) presented information on disaster recovery. These individuals included: Paul Timmons with FEMA Individual Assistance; Pedro Perez with FEMA Floodplain Mitigation; Jerry Frye with the National Flood Insurance Program; Sharon Karr, FEMA Public Information Officer; and Garth MacDonald, SBA Public Information Officer with the Office of Disaster Assistance). Mr. Timmons provided an overview of the efforts FEMA has made with the City of Houston and Harris County in regards to their response to the Tax Day flood event. Within two weeks the agency opened up four fixed Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) to help homeowners, renters and businesses who suffered losses during the flood register for federal assistance. Specialists at these DRCs can provide guidance regarding disaster recovery and rental resources, explain written correspondence received from FEMA, inform survivors of the status of their application, make referrals to other organizations and answer questions. The fixed DRCs are located at:

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston, TX 77074

Greenspoint Commercial Office Building, 16800 Imperial Valley Dr., Houston, TX 77060

Cypress Creek Christian Church and Community Center, 6823 Cypresswood Dr., Spring, TX 77379

Lone Star College Cy-Fair Library, 9191 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress, TX 77433

Hours at the centers are from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays and closed on Sundays until further notice. Survivors can also apply online at DisasterAssistance.gov or by phone (voice, 711 or relay service) at 800-621-3362. TTY users should call 800-462-7585. The toll-free lines are open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Applicants will be asked to provide:

Social Security number

Address of the damaged primary residence

Description of the damage

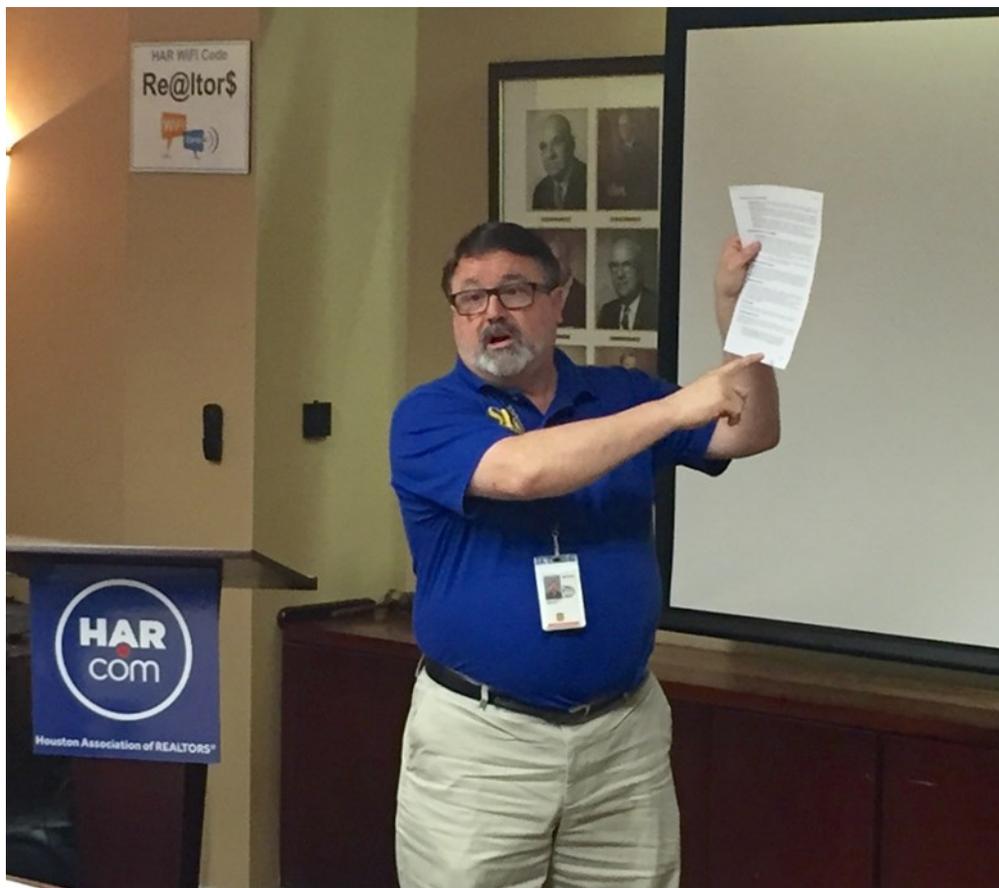
Information about insurance coverage

A current contact telephone number

An address where they can receive mail

Bank account and routing numbers for those preferring direct deposit of funds

Eligible survivors should register with FEMA even if they have insurance. FEMA cannot duplicate insurance payments, but under-insured applicants may receive help after their insurance claims have been settled.



(SBA Public Information Officer Garth MacDonald showing the GAAG volunteers how to get disaster help from the agency. The first step is to register with FEMA.)

The Governmental Affairs Advisory Group volunteers took this valuable information with them after the meeting and can now inform their clients and colleagues on how to better prepare for the next flood event. The briefing also gave some of the presenters who truly are working to resolve the flooding issues in Harris County an opportunity to meet each other for the first time. It is not a matter of if but when Mother Nature will hit next. REALTORS® have the tools to be resources in the community and need to be at the table with stakeholders when it comes to addressing the needs of homeowners.

Regional Monthly Recap

Want to keep up to date with REALTOR® Issues?

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Read the TAR Legislative Liaison

Visit the NAR REALTOR® Action Center



In May...

Harris County

- Houston City Council voted unanimously to approve the city's annual budgets for Fiscal Year 2017, which includes approximately \$2.3 billion in General Fund expenditures. The expenditure budget for all funds totals approximately \$5.1 billion.
- Houston City Council voted unanimously to ratify the property tax increase reflected in the annual budgets for Fiscal Year 2017 that will require raising more revenue from property taxes than in Fiscal Year 2016.
- Harris County Commissioners Court voted unanimously to approve property tax homestead exemptions for the 2016 Tax Year. The exemptions include \$5,000 or 20 percent, whichever is greater, of an adult's residence homestead, as well as exemptions of \$160,000 of the appraised value of a residence homestead for those who are disabled or are 65 years of age or older.

Bay Area Houston

- Pasadena City Council voted 7-1, with Pat Van Houte opposed, to approve, on first reading, an ordinance clarifying the designation of council member districts and at-large positions for city elections. The amendment renames the two at-large positions on the city council from District G and District H at -large to Place 1 and Place 2 at-large, while the district seats remain districts A, B, C, D, E and F.
- Pearland City Council voted unanimously to authorize the issuance of certificates of obligation in an amount not to exceed \$14.2 million to fund various capital improvement projects in the FY2016 Budget. The projects include \$6 million for the reconstruction of East Orange Street, from State Highway 35 to Schleider, as well as \$4,252,518 for renovations to the City Hall complex. Other projects include the replacement of Fire Station No. 1, expansion of the Tom Reid Library, and improvements to Centennial Park.

Fort Bend County

- Missouri City City Council voted 5-1, with Chris Preston opposed, to approve, on final reading, an ordinance disannexing a 33.07 acre tract of land located north of Sienna Springs Boulevard, south of Oyster Creek Farms subdivision, west of the Houston Community College Sienna Plantation campus, and east of Section 3 of the Sienna Village of Anderson Springs residential subdivision.
- Sugar Land City Council voted unanimously to authorize the issuance of \$22.5 million in certificates of obligation to fund projects in the FY2016 Capital Improvement Program. The projects include the University Boulevard North Project, improvements to State Highway 6 from Brooks Street to Lexington, reconstruction of Industrial Boulevard, and others. Also included are improvements to the Riverstone Water Plant and the Surface Water Transmission Line to the water plant.

Montgomery County

- Montgomery County began rolling out a new service, Smart911, that provides medical, family member and location information directly to first responders when a registered individual calls 911 so that an emergency response can arrive more quickly. Smart911, hosted by Rave Mobile Safety, is already available to Montgomery County residents, though a formal launch is not planned until early July.

Important Dates

- **May 31-June 7: Early Voting for Sugar Land and Missouri City Runoff Elections**
- **June 1:** Montgomery County Networking Brunch at River Plantation Country Club (550 Country Club Drive, Conroe) from 9-11 am. RSVP to realtorlunch-eon@gmail.com.
- **June 6-June 14: Early Voting for Pearland Runoff Election**
- **June 8:** Bay Area Realtor Networking Breakfast at Luby's (4709 Center Street, Deer Park) from 8:15-9:45 am. RSVP to Troy Cothran at troythestarfish@aol.com.
- **June 8:** Greater Northwest Breakfast at Raveneaux Country Club (9415 Cypresswood Drive, Spring) from 8:30-10 am. RSVP to Ben Bryant at benbryant-sells@gmail.com.
- **June 9:** Katy Luncheon & Auction at Cinco Ranch Golf Club (23030 Cinco Ranch Blvd, Katy) starting at 11:30 am. Contact Karen Driscoll for more information. (TREPAC)
- **June 11: Runoff Election Day for Sugar Land and Missouri City Runoff Elections**
- **June 16:** Fort Bend Networking & Business Meeting at Sweetwater Country Club (4400 Palm Royale Blvd, Sugar Land) from 11:30 am– 1:15 pm. RSVP to Linda Kraner at linda.kraner@alamotitle.com or 281-201-9090.
- **June 18: Pearland Runoff Election Day**
- **August 12:** Greater Northwest Bowl-a-thon at AMF Willow Lanes starting at 1:00 pm. Contact Karen Driscoll for more information. (TREPAC)
- **August 25:** Lake Houston Cocktail Reception at Walden on Lake Houston starting at 5:30 pm. Contact Karen Driscoll for more information. (TREPAC)
- **October 27:** Montgomery County Field Day. Contact Karen Driscoll for more information. (TREPAC)
- **November 8:** General Election Day

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