

Texas Tidbits: State Supreme Court sidelines Houston ordinance

July 31, 2015

The Texas Supreme Court ruled July 24 that Houston must repeal a controversial non-discrimination ordinance or put it on the ballot for voters to decide. Houston Mayor Annise ParkerA state district judge determined in April citizens seeking repeal of the city's ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity did not get enough valid petition signatures to force a referendum. The case sparked national interest when the mayor's office obtained and eventually withdrew subpoenas ordering five pastors involved in the petition campaign to turn over sermons related to the issue. The city secretary initially determined there were enough valid signatures for the petition to be valid, but the city attorney and mayor disagreed. The Supreme Court, however, said the city's charter assigns responsibility for certifying petitions to the secretary, not the city council, and gave the council 30 days to either repeal the measure or place it on the November ballot.

Baylor regents approve renovation. [Baylor University's](#) board of regents approved \$26 million to renovate the Hankamer Cashion Complex. Renovation of the 164,000-square-foot Hankamer Cashion Complex will begin this fall, as faculty from the Hankamer School of Business move to the new Paul L. Foster Campus for Business and Innovation. Once renovated, the facility will house administration, faculty and clinics of the department of communication sciences and disorders, the department of computer science and the Center for Global Engagement. The first phase of renovation is expected to be completed in fall 2016.

UMHB performing arts center benefits from foundation grant. The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, based in Richmond, Va., awarded the [University of Mary Hardin-Baylor](#) a \$200,000 grant for the construction of a new performing arts center. The gift joins a 2014 grant of \$100,000, bringing the foundation's total support for the project to \$300,000. Plans call for the new performing arts center to be built near the entrance to the UMHB campus. The 40,725-square-foot facility has been designed with multifunctional rooms so the center can be used as a teaching facility throughout the week as well as a venue for special musical and theatrical performances. The \$20 million center will include a 546-seat theater, as well as a 2,000-square-foot performance lab that can be used as a theater, a classroom or a room for social gatherings.

Baylor board sets tuition and fees. Baylor University's board of regents voted to increase undergraduate tuition for the fall 2016 and spring 2017 academic year by 4.5 percent, rather than a planned 5 percent. Officials noted the board continues to work actively to reduce tuition increases and introduce additional affordability initiatives. This represents the lowest percentage tuition increase in more than 20 years and is below the average percentage increase over the last 25 years. With its flat-rate tuition structure, Baylor's tuition will be \$37,996 for the 2016-17 academic year, or \$18,998 per fall and spring semesters. The general student fee will be \$4,010 for the 2016-17 academic year, or \$2,005 per fall and spring semesters. Tuition for graduate and professional programs will increase similarly.