SECRETARY OF STATE RESIGNS AFTER BOTCHED VOTER PURGE

Texas Secretary of State Kim o. dust Abbott, who oversaw the state's botched voter purge, has resigned. The decision was announced Wednesday morning, after Abbott was indicted on 17 more counts; free press advocates see peril.

In their voices when journalists are disrespected, condemned, ridiculed, assaulted and constantly face layoffs, pay cuts and worse, let us know that we honor and support journalists and journalism. Keep your work important to the people and essential to democracy itself. — Roger Simmons

QUICK HITS

• Hispanic Communications DFV workshop, “Video Production for Communications” — 10 a.m.-n.m. Saturday, June 1. The Dallas Morning News, 9544 Comer St. Info.

• U.S. Open Networking “Family Exploration Saturday” — 10 a.m. June 1 (every Saturday). Info.

• Arlington Communication Council monthly program; “Friends of the Arlington Parks” — 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 5, Fielder House Museum, Fielder Road at Amon Street, Arlington. Info.


• Fort Worth Magazine’s annual Best Of Party — 6 p.m. VIP, 6:30 general admission Friday, June 21, DoubleTree by Hilton. Info.

• BRIT Reads Book Club, “Becoming Native to This Place” — noon June 17 (every third Monday). Info.

• Writers Guild of Texas monthly program, “Speak Up! I Can’t Hear You” — 7 p.m. Monday, June 10, RBP Ranch Stockyards, 801. Info.

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GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Two important open government measures that cleared both chambers last week received Abbott's signature on Tuesday, the second of the two that update the Texas Open Meetings Act. Both pieces of legislation next head to Gov. Greg Abbott.

The proposals were among the top priorities of the Freedom of Information Foundation in its legislative session. • Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, and Rep. Giovanni Capriglione, R-Southlake, worked together on their respective bills. It helps notes in the Public Information Act created when the Texas Supreme Court issued rulings in 2015 striking most speech-like protections in the government contracts with private companies and nonprofits. The bill specifies key information in contracts that must be revealed to the public. • Watson and Rep. Eric Johnson, D-Dallas, joined together on their legislation. The Open Meetings Act bill is further to a Court of Criminal Appeals ruling declaring the “walking quorum” provision in the bill unconstitutional. The legislation makes the law’s language more specific. More here.

Our photo: Courtesy of the author.

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Our photo: Courtesy of the author.
Region 8 rallies freelancers

Freelancers, unite. Whether you freelance by choice, to keep working after a layoff or to reinvent yourself, SPJ can help you get discovered by editors and connect with other freelancers. Contact SPJ Region 8 coordinator Kathryn Jones (kathrynjones1956@gmail.com) to join the new SPJ Region 8 Freelancers Network.

Jones taches journalism at Tarleton State University but is herself a longtime freelancer. She was among a group of independent journalists affiliated with the Association for Women Journalists who created a successful Fort Worth-Dallas freelance network in the early '90s.

"We met for lunch each month, discussed opportunities and challenges, shared industry news and enjoyed a sense of camaraderie," she recalls. "We also referred assignments to each other — if an editor needed a specific person for an assignment and contacted a freelance journalist who wasn't available or interested, that journalist could refer someone in the network for the job. Some people got magazine assignments that way. One person even got a book deal."

The idea is to reprise the network under the auspices of SPJ and expand it throughout Texas and Oklahoma. At the Region 8 Conference in March, several people expressed interest. For SPJ members there's no cost. The network will evolve, but it starts with compiling a list of freelance journalists (writers, graphic artists, videographers, photographers), their contact information, skills and kind of assignments preferred.

"We'll create our own regional freelance directory and message list," Jones said. "The more people who sign up, the more we can help each other."

Freelancers represent one of SPJ's largest constituencies, so resources already are available at the national level, including the SPJ Freelance Community website page and the SPJ Freelance Community Facebook group. "The Independent Journalist" blog also covers topics of interest.

The SPJ Freelance Community's guide to freelance writing is available online, as is an events calendar and on-demand sessions on getting work and personal branding. You also can create an entry in the national SPJ freelance directory to connect with editors and colleagues.

ON CAMPUS

The UT Arlington newspaper, The Shorthorn, was named Best All-Around Non-Daily Student Newspaper in SPJ's national 2018 Mark of Excellence Awards. The Shorthorn prints one broadsheet issue a week, augmented by online and updated coverage 24/7.

EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM 2019

Early registration ends June 27 for EIJ19, the national SPJ convention, this year in San Antonio, Sept. 5-7, at the Grand Hyatt downtown. Workshops and breakout sessions will explore freelancing and grants, becoming a better data sleuth, telling climate stories, minimizing harm while reporting on suicide, staying safe when covering natural disasters and civic unrest, and managing newsroom stress.

• One of the sessions spotlights a development in Region 8 — how NPR and Texas public radio stations are building a prototype "regional news hub" with the Texas Standard and other collaborations. The session is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 6, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

• ABC News anchor and San Antonio native John Quiñones will receive this year's RTDNA John F. Hogan Award. Other highlights include two excursions, a 35-minute boat tour of the Riverwalk and a tour of the Alamo. Details and register here and here.
Dallas Morning News city columnist Robert Wilonsky received the Open Doors Award, "11 area journalism students were presented $17,500 in scholarships; and exceptional journalism in Texas and Oklahoma — SPJ Region 8 — was lauded at the 16th annual First Amendment Awards and Open Doors is Fort Worth SPJ's highest honor."

**OVER & OUT | John Drury, Fort Worth SPJ**

Okay, it's gratitude day. To Roger Summers for his position statement on journalists and journalism. It's so good, it proclaims its impassioned truth from high atop p. 1. And to the UTA Shorthorn, which SPJ named the 2018 best non-daily student paper in America. Emphasis added. To him—their—pleas earned. And to Kathryn James for breathing life into the SPJ Region 8 Freelancers Network. And to Tommy Thompson at the Texas Center for Community Journalism for collaborating with the Texas Press Association and the Texas Newspaper Foundation to offer, free to you and me, a series of timely, outside-the-box workshops. And to the student-run ad agency Ross, dynamic business outreach with a purple TCU tue. And to the Wedgedwood/Ridglea/Cityview Shopping News, for 56 years a colorful, 25,000-circulation thread linking west-side neighborhoods and merchants. Burdened by tariffs and tornadoes and temper-tantrum “leaders” who would first punish us, then destroy us, I feel the need more and more to try to calm down and force the happy. Accomplishment and compassion and positive energy—they’re all around. In my life. In your life, too. The list of people who inspire me, elevate me and give me hope way exceeds the space here. What do you want to bet you’re on it?

The owner of the life-sized replica of Noah’s Ark in northern Kentucky has sued its insurers for refusing to cover rain damage. SPJ factoids: Freelance journalist and videographer Brian Carmody will not get the equipment seized in the raid back to p. 2. And to the UTA Shorthorn, which SPJ named the 2018 best non-daily student paper in America. Emphasis added. To him—their—pleas earned. And to Kathryn James for breathing life into the SPJ Region 8 Freelancers Network. And to Tommy Thompson at the Texas Center for Community Journalism for collaborating with the Texas Press Association and the Texas Newspaper Foundation to offer, free to you and me, a series of timely, outside-the-box workshops. And to the student-run ad agency Ross, dynamic business outreach with a purple TCU tue. And to the Wedgedwood/Ridglea/Cityview Shopping News, for 56 years a colorful, 25,000-circulation thread linking west-side neighborhoods and merchants. Burdened by tariffs and tornadoes and temper-tantrum “leaders” who would first punish us, then destroy us, I feel the need more and more to try to calm down and force the happy. Accomplishment and compassion and positive energy—they’re all around. In my life. In your life, too. The list of people who inspire me, elevate me and give me hope way exceeds the space here. What do you want to bet you’re on it?