







BJ and Jennie Owens volunteer sorting tomatoes for Monday's food distribution at the First United Methodist Church's Bread of Life.

ENTERPRISE PHOTO / KARI LINDSEY

## Legislature looking at TRS-Care

By Jim Malewitz, The Texas Tribune, with Morgan Smith

Saying a nearly broke state health care program for retired Texas teachers is "too important an issue to leave unaddressed," the head of the House budget-writing committee pledged recently to work to fully fund the program.

"I want to commit to you today that the House will fund our obligations to our retired teachers," state Rep. John Otto, R-Dayton, said following a meeting of the House Appropriations Committee, which he chairs.

Without action from lawmakers, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas expects its health insurance program - TRS-Care - to run out of money during the 2016 fiscal year, with a \$768 million shortfall by 2017. A cash infusion from the Legislature would prevent the retirement system from hiking premiums for the fund's more than 233,000 retirees and their dependents, or cutting their benefits - its two other main options for keeping the fund solvent.

Following Otto's announcement, other Texas lawmakers voiced their support.

"Texas teachers are a large part of molding the Texas leaders of tomorrow, and many teachers and retirees have expressed their concerns on this matter," state Rep. Dan Flynn, R-Canton, chairman of the

House Pensions Committee, said in a statement.

House Speaker Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, tweeted that the "House appreciates retired educators."

Texas teacher groups also welcomed the announcement.

"We're very happy to hear that," said Clay Robison, spokesman for the Texas State Teachers Association. "These are people on limited income who have spent their careers educating school children - one of the most important jobs in the state."

Robison's group also wants lawmakers to increase the state's contribution to health care premiums for active teachers. Texas has kept its contribution at \$75 per month since 2002, as premiums have more than doubled.

"That's basically cutting into their paychecks because they haven't been getting raises," he said.

In 2013, retiree premiums made up about 36 percent of TRS-Care revenue, according to Legislative Budget Board estimates, while the state chipped in 24 percent. Active teachers and school districts were the next biggest contributors, followed by federal subsidies and investment income.

Why is the program so troubled? That's largely due to soaring health care costs and lawmakers' piecemeal approach to funding a

system that experts have long considered unsustainable.

Before 1986, Texas had no health insurance program for retired teachers. When lawmakers created the program, they expected its initial funding would last until 1995 - long enough to design a more sustainable model, the retirement system says. But lawmakers never did that, leaving the agency to occasionally request more funding to keep the program solvent - as it is doing now.

"TRS-Care is in a crisis moment," Tim Lee, executive director of the Texas Retired Teachers Association, said Wednesday in a statement cheering Otto's announcement.

If lawmakers simply choose to tap the general fund to plug the short-term budget gap without making structural changes, the fund would still be short about \$1 billion next biennium, Brian Guthrie, executive director of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, told the Senate Finance Committee earlier this month. Several senators at that hearing expressed support for keeping the fund afloat.

"This is an emergency right now, so they need to address this," Robison said. "And then longer term, yes, they need to see a way for making it something retirees can continue - and not go from crisis to crisis."

## Obituaries

### Putman

Norma Putman, 80, died Monday, March 2, 2015, in Childress.

Services were held on Thursday, March 5, 2015, in the Clarendon Church of Christ with Mark Putman and Don Stone, officiating.



Putman

Burial followed at Citizens Cemetery in Clarendon.

Arrangements were under the direction of Robertson Funeral Directors of Clarendon.

Norma was born October 13, 1934, in Claude to Hardy and Nadine Kerly Bobbitt. She married L.M. Putman, Jr. on April 23, 1951, in Portales, NM. She was a teacher for 31 years prior to her retirement. She was one of few women that was certified in all areas of science and was certified in Oklahoma in 30 subjects. She enjoyed sewing and crocheting. She was a member of the Clarendon Church of Christ.

She was preceded in death

by her parents; her husband; and a daughter, Marcia.

She is survived by 2 sons, Donnie Putman of Sanger and Terry Putman of Las Vegas, NV; a daughter, Jullie Milam of Panhandle; 2 brothers, Buddy Bobbitt of Memphis and Emmett Bobbitt of Lubbock; 7 grandchildren; and 6 great grandchildren.

The family request memorials be sent to Clarendon Church of Christ, Memphis Convalescent Center, Childress RMC Hospice, or the International Essential Tremor Foundation.

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Skyler waits on first during the lady Broncos game in Clarendon last week.

COURTESY PHOTO / CHS

## Lady Broncos slam WTH

By Sandy Anderberg

The Lady Broncos racked up run after run in their 39-21 romp of West Texas High last Saturday. The win put Clarendon at 1-0 in district play.

"This was the longest five-inning game I have ever been a part of," head coach Gary Jack said. "The WTH pitchers struggled throwing strikes and they walked us a lot. It was a crazy long game, but we survived and won."

The Lady Broncos had the Lady Commanches down 25-6 in the second inning and went up 39-11 in the third without ever trailing. Briley Chadwick was on the mound for four innings before Sterling King came in to close. Taylor DeGrate was behind the plate and, according to Jack, did a good job at that position. Offensively, Jack had several players who hit the ball well. He gave credit to Brooke Martin, Taylor Gaines, Skyer White, Chadwick, Karlee

Adams, Shelby Baxter, and King.

"We made some good plays on defense but made a couple of mistakes, also," Jack said. "We just have not had any practice outside and have had only two days of outside practice so far, with the rest being in the gym. We are still doing well and getting that win at WTH to open district play was really big."

The Lady Broncos played a junior varsity game following the first game and won 13-6. Allyson Hogan was on the mound with Hannah Hommel behind the plate.

"Allyson pitched well and Hannah caught a good game," Jack said. "Zaryia Smith, Baxter, King, and Martin made some nice hits."

The Lady Broncos will take on the CHS Alumni on Saturday, March 14, at 1:00 at the Lady Bronco field.

"This game is always a lot of fun and there will be about 15 ex-players coming back to play," Jack said.



Brooke Martin catches a popfly during the lady Broncos softball game last week.

COURTESY PHOTO / CHS

## Morris places 10th Regional Powerlifting

By Sandy Anderberg

Clarendon senior Chelsea Morris has worked hard all year and competed in her last Regional meet last week.

Morris finished 10th in the Region in the 198-pound weight class and tied for fourth in class 2A.

According to coach Johnny Nino, Morris did a great job at the meet.

"She competed really well and

I was really proud of the way she competed on Friday," Nino said. "We went for 310-pounds on the squat and she lifted it, but it was disallowed on a technicality. The squat put us behind the other competitors and we couldn't make up the difference on the other two lifts."

"I am really proud of how far she has come the last couple of years. She has improved so much. I will surely miss her next year."

## CHS freshman named newcomer of the year

In her first year of high school basketball and first year as a Lady Bronco, Carlee Johnson was recognized by the participating district coaches and named as the Newcomer of the Year. Senior Allyson Grahn was named as the Defensive Co-MVP Player of the Year.

It was also Grahn's first year with the Lady Broncos. Fellow seniors Taylor Gaines and Taylor

DeGrate were also named to the All-District Team.

All four players named to the All-District team were very instrumental in the success of the Lady Broncos' season this year. They were great leaders on the court and stayed solid all year long. While Johnson will return next year, the three seniors will be greatly missed on the court.

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