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County turns to GOP, holds no Democratic primary

DALLAS (AP) — No Democratic runoff is scheduled today in Hansford County, a rural Panhandle area that once was a Democratic stronghold.

That's because, for the first time in at least 20 years, the county had no Democratic primary.

It's the only Texas county this year to have no Democratic primary, and one of seven without primaries for the two major parties.

Hansford County now belongs to the GOP, officials say.

"It's really funny because over the last eight to 10 years it has become predominantly Republican," said County Clerk Kim Vera. "Everybody has switched to Republican. I've worked here for 20 years and when I started, the county was predominantly Democrat."

All the elected officials in Hansford County, about 100 miles north of Amarillo, claim Republican ties, although many are former Democrats.

"We don't even have a Democratic chairman because nobody wants to hold it," Vera said.

The Secretary of State's office said six counties — Culberson, Duval, Foard, La Salle, Loving and Upton — had no Republican primaries this year.

But it is much less common — near-

ly unheard of — for a Texas county to go a Democratic primary.

"What we used to see is there would be a number of counties that wouldn't have Republican primaries. That's starting to shift a little bit," said Ann McGeehan, who works in the elections division of the Secretary of State's office.

"We still see most counties having two parties. It used to be the reverse —

"It's really funny because over the last eight to 10 years it has become predominantly Republican."

— Kim Vera
 Hansford county clerk

growing consistently in primary and office holders since the said Republican Party spokesperson Robert Black means is, Texas is a full-party state and that is a very development for the state."

Republican primaries were 254 counties in 1996 and 1998. Hansford County held a primary two years ago, but the county's reluctant party chairman and a judge showed. Not even the chairperson.

"I had an election myself and we waited from 7 in the morning night. Not a soul showed up. Glen Harris, former Democrat Party chairperson for the county about 5,400 people.

But it made no difference, he said, because there were Democratic candidates for city and county office.

County Tax Assessor Helen campaigned for and held her Democrat since 1973. This year for office under the GOP banner. Black said the dearth of Democratic candidates in statewide races bolstering the GOP's efforts to Democrats.

News in Brief FFA rules called into question

TYLER (AP) — A high school student is questioning the ethics of students who pay to have their show livestock raised for them and then walk away with top honors after presenting the animals at Future Farmers of America competitions.

Winona High School student Laura Eckerberger, 15, said she became aware of the practice when an unidentified student from Bullard High School approached her at a recent Smith County Junior Livestock Show.

The boy told Eckerberger that the night before the livestock show was the first time he had seen his show hog.

Eckerberger told the Tyler Morning Telegraph in Tuesday's editions that under 4-H rules, members are required to keep their animals at their homes and to raise the animals for show on their own.

But FFA rules apparently do not ban the practice of ghost raising hogs, she said.

The Bullard Independent School District board of trustees listened to a letter Eckerberger read aloud at a meeting Monday night. The letter is addressed to the Texas FFA Association in Austin.

Lockheed machinists prepare for long strike

FORT WORTH (AP) — With machinists walking picket lines outside, Lockheed Martin planned to resume some production work today on its mile-long assembly line with salaried, non-striking workers.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. officials say they expect to deliver four B-16 bomber jets on time this month, regardless of how long the nearly 2,500 hourly wage-earning machinists remain on strike.

"Obviously, it would not be honest to say that the strike is having no impact at all," said Joe Stout, the company's spokesperson. "But we don't think we will have any problem making scheduled deliveries for April, even if the strike went on."

Things are less certain after that, especially with no new contract talks scheduled.

Leaders of Local 776 of the International Association of Machinists say the walkout could be lengthy.

The union's strike began at 12:01 a.m. Monday after its three-year contract expired.

Union president Pat Lane said the company's proposal included a 10 percent pay raise over three years and made changes in insurance benefits but didn't address the union's concerns about job security, cost-of-living adjustments and equality with plants doing the same work.

"We are trying to stop the bleeding primarily, and the company's offer puts us farther behind after three years than we currently are," Lane said.

"If the company wants to get right and get fair, we can settle this today," he said. "If they don't, I'm predicting that it is going to be a fairly long strike. It could go into months."

Lane said only five union members crossed the picket line and reported to work Monday.

The plant, which has about 11,000 employees overall, is Lockheed's primary manufacturer of 16 fighter jets.


Stout said that negotiations, the company did a survey of employees to determine skills that would be in production. About 300 had such skills, some will be in production.

In addition to the F-16, the operation is the Lockheed plant that part of the fuselage F-22 fighter and the Japanese F-2.

Lockheed has several major strikes the past two years, notably 80 plants in the United Arab Emirates and 24 to Egypt. Analysts for several countries, including Norway and Chile.

Pierre Chan, an analyst for Credit Suisse in Boston, said the strike depends on how long it lasts.


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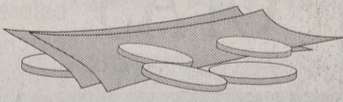
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