



HOUSTON ★ CHRONICLE

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NATION

S. Carolina man guilty in church killings

Dylann Roof, a self-radicalized young white supremacist who killed nine black parishioners last year in a planned assault on a Charleston, S.C., church, is found guilty by a federal jury on hate-crime charges. **Page A7**

IN MEMORIAM



Craig Sager was famous for his outlandish outfits. Colorful NBA sideline reporter Sager dies at 65
 Craig Sager, the longtime NBA sideline reporter famous for his flashy suits and probing questions, dies after a long battle with leukemia. **Page C1**

CITY | STATE

Search expands for missing mom in League City

Dozens of volunteers clamber through thick brush at the northwestern edge of League City searching for a 30-year-old woman reported missing last week. **Page A3**

NATION

Milwaukee officer charged in fatal shooting

Prosecutors charge a Milwaukee police officer Thursday with killing a black man in August, alleging the man had thrown his gun away and was unarmed when the officer fired the fatal shot. **Page A7**

BUSINESS

Houston to host world petroleum summit in 2020

Houston is named host of the 2020 World Petroleum Congress that attracts over 10,000 global energy delegates when it's held every three years. **Page B1**

Judge supports religious display

School is ordered to restore 'Charlie Brown Christmas' door decoration

By Mike Ward

AUSTIN — A state district judge on Thursday ordered a "Charlie Brown Christmas" decoration at a Killeen school restored after a principal ordered it taken down over a biblical message that educators said could be offensive.

The effect of the ruling by Judge Jack Jones could be short-lived. Classes end for the year at noon Friday.

Following an hourlong hearing, Jones ruled that the door display featuring the "Peanuts" character Linus and his explanation of why Christmas matters, should be put back up with an added label: "Ms. Shannon's holiday message," according to officials who were present at the hearing.

Nurse's aide Dedra Shannon had put up the display on her office door at Patterson Middle School on Dec. 5, and the principal two days later. **Lawsuit continues on A13**

White House ties Putin to hacking

By Bradley Klapper and Josh Lederman
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration suggested Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally authorized the hacking of Democratic officials' email accounts in the runup to the presidential election and said it was "fact" that such actions helped Donald Trump's campaign.

The White House also assailed Trump himself, saying he must have known of Russia's interference.

No proof was offered for any of the accusations, the latest to unsettle America's uneasy transition from eight years under Democratic President Barack Obama to a new Republican administration led by Trump. The claims of Russian meddling in the election also have heightened already debilitating tensions between Washington and Moscow over Syria, Ukraine and a host of other. **Trump continues on A15**

HPD chief pushes reforms

Acevedo wants body cams to record earlier, new unit for police shootings

By Andrew Kragie and Lise Olsen

When Houston police officers shot and killed an armed man standing in a street intersection this summer, officers' body cameras taped the incident — but the recordings didn't start until after the man had been shot.

The video released to the public didn't convince skeptics that police were telling the truth about the man allegedly pointing his gun at the officers. And critics questioned whether the department's homicide division could investigate the officer-related shooting death objectively.

After just two weeks



Chief Art Acevedo says he wants to improve transparency.

on the job, Art Acevedo, Houston's new police chief, is calling for two major changes in department policy to improve transparency. He wants body cameras to start recording automatically when police

officers exit their vehicles, and he plans to create a specialized unit this spring that will investigate officer-related shootings and alleged wrongdoing by police.

"To me the relationship between a police department and a community starts with legitimacy," Acevedo told the Houston Chronicle this week. "Cameras and the way we investigate officer-involved **Acevedo continues on A13**

Federal investigation urged on special ed cap



Marie D. De Jesús / Houston Chronicle

Yajaira Hernandez comforts her sons Edwin, left, and Harry while she listens at the Austin session.

Parents, educators demand action at session with officials in Austin

By Brian M. Rosenthal and Andrea Zelinski

AUSTIN — At least 150 rambunctious and angry parents, educators and advocates packed a government service center in East Austin Thursday night to tell federal education officials in

no uncertain terms that Texas' cap on special education has unlawfully harmed thousands of disabled children and should be rigorously investigated.

Christopher Dennis,

the district attorney of Hockley County and the father of two special needs children, helped set the tone early on when he described how hard it had been to obtain appropriate educational services for his kids and called special education in Texas "a culture of avoidance — and what it avoids is the truth."

"You said you're try-

DENIED

ing to figure out what the appropriate next steps are," Dennis, who had traveled 350 miles to attend the forum, said to loud applause. "Let me tell you what the appropriate next steps are. I'm a district attorney. I know what the next **Speakers continues on A15**

★ » Read our full investigation and search your school district at HoustonChronicle.com/denied

Ground zero for Super Bowl events



James Nielsen / Houston Chronicle

A Texas-shape lazy river is one of the features of the new 1,000-room Marriott Marquis in downtown Houston. The hotel is getting ready for its first big role as host during Super Bowl LI. Story on A2.

Judge halts state's fetal burial rule

By Andrea Zelinski

A federal judge on Thursday blocked a new state rule that requires fetal remains resulting from an abortion or miscarriage be buried or cremated regardless of the length of gestation or the woman's wishes.

The temporary restraining order by U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks will prevent the Texas Depart-

ment of State Health Services from imposing the requirement that abortion rights advocates labeled an unconstitutional barrier to abortion and an unnecessary burden on women who choose to have one.

"The rule is intended to send a message to the Supreme Court that Texas is going to defy them and it's to send a message to women that the state's ideology **Rule continues on A13**



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Marriott readies for Super Bowl

By Diane Cowen

Workers were busy checking things off their punch lists, decorators were moving chairs and tables just so and restaurant staffs were training new cooks and wait staff at the soon-to-open Marriott Marquis in downtown Houston this week.

Sandwiched between Minute Maid Park and Toyota Center and across from the George R. Brown Convention Center, the 1,000-room Marriott, independently built and owned by RIDA Development Corp. for about \$370 million, is getting ready for its first big role as the host hotel during Super Bowl LI events.

Jay Marsella, director of sales and marketing, said the hotel will have a soft opening on Dec. 26 with about 100 rooms already booked, but the place will really get hopping in early January when the Super Bowl staff arrives to prepare for the Feb. 4, game.

During past years, host hotels often were on full or partial lockdown so the public couldn't get into the hotel hosting the event's biggest VIPs. For this Super Bowl, the hotel will be completely open so anyone can walk right into the spot for what will likely be some of the city's best people-watching.

The hotel will be booked with NFL and Super Bowl staff, top media personalities and a number of football players



James Nielsen / Houston Chronicle

The Marriott Marquis Houston will have a soft opening Dec. 26.

in town for the big game.

"This will be ground zero for everything," Marsella said.

Marsella is sure there's one amenity at the hotel that will have everyone talking: the Texas-shaped lazy river pool perched 110 feet above ground level. Guests can relax in that 80-degree water or splash in the infinity pool while looking out at the city's soaring skyline.

Leading up to the Super Bowl, one of the biggest fund-raisers — yes, held at the Marriott Marquis — will be the host committee's Feb. 1 gala honoring Bob and Janice McNair, with Lynn Wyatt and James A. Baker III as honorary chairs.

After the big event, the hotel is likely to host some of the city's biggest charity events, as the new space claims to have the biggest

ballroom in town — nearly 40,000 square feet, lined with giant circular chandeliers. Altogether, Marsella said, the ballroom chandeliers weigh a massive 60 tons.

The hotel will have some of the city's most highly-anticipated new restaurants, including the Biggio's sports bar and Hugo Ortega's newest concept, Xochi, which focuses on the food and drink of Oaxaca, Mexico.

While Xochi won't open until January, Biggio's and other hotel restaurants — the coastal casual Walker Street Kitchen, Cueva bar and Texas T cafe — will open with the hotel on Dec. 26.

No word yet on the Biggio's menu; Marsella said they're still tinkering over the details. This multi-level restaurant will have 27 taps for beer and more

TV space than you can count. On one large wall they've stacked two TVs that are each about 20 feet wide and 15 feet tall.

Dallas-based Looney and Associates, which has done hotel projects all over the world, did the interior design, capturing the city's forward-thinking spirit and enterprising nature in bold marbles on floors and walls, modern furniture with cool mid-century touches and glittery lighting everywhere.

Even the elevators speak of the Space City, with NASA-related mural-like installations at the back of every elevator. (Cue the selfie sticks.)

The 1,000 guest suites on 29 floors include two presidential suites and four vice-presidential suites.

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Trending stories from

houstonchronicle.com:

1 Throwback Thursday to Houston's past

See Houston's skyline as it looked in 1949, when there were used car lots on its periphery.

2 Why BP is moving 200 Houston jobs to Denver

The British-based oil company sees its future in the Rockies.

3 Layoffs, research cutbacks on the table as MD Anderson moves

to improve its financial health

The cancer hospital has had three straight months of losses.

4 Coaches' wives the unsung heroes of high school football

They put up with a lot, particularly around play-off time.

5 Through the pool bottom, a view of downtown

Swim with a view of the city beneath you.

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