Austin American-Statesman

STATESMAN.COM • THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2026 • VOL. 156, NO. 89 • $3.00

TEXAS DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS

Priorities arise for session's agenda

Casar urges party to take a 'bold' stance, tackle rising living costs

By James Osborne
WASHINGTON BUREAU

U.S. Rep. Greg Casar, chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said in an interview Monday that Democrats need to get more aggressive in lowering Americans' living expenses when they take control of Congress in January.

A week after the midterm election, Casar, an Austin Democrat and former labor activist, named expanding Medicare coverage, cutting prescription drug prices and banning AI companies from using personal data to set prices as the sort of legislation Democrats' leader Hakeem Jeffries should make a priority once he becomes House Speaker.

"What we heard from voters is they want a Democratic Party that is bold and is going to fight for them," he said. "We can't afford to continue to be seen as the party of nervous lawyers that tin-

Casar continues on A4



Mark Schiefelbein/Associated Press

Texas Democrats called President Donald Trump's admission that his deportation policy was "too tough" an opportunity for reform.

Immigration reform negotiations pitched after Trump interview

By James Osborne
WASHINGTON BUREAU

A group of Democratic U.S. House members from Texas said Wednesday they were willing to work with President Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress on immigration reform, following the president's comments this week that his deportation program had been "too tough."

At a news conference outside the U.S. Capitol, members including Henry Cuellar, Sylvia Garcia, Vicente Gonzalez, Veronica Escobar and Joaquin Castro — as well as newly elected Bobby Pulido and Leticia Gutierrez — said the Democratic wave in last week's midterm election showed voters disapprove of federal operations targeting immigrants without criminal records.

"The mass deportation campaign has been killing people, killing communities and killing busi-

Reform continues on A4



Photos by Sara Diggins/Austin American-Statesman

Army veteran Walter Ivie listens to speakers during the Veterans Day ceremony at Westminster senior living community in Austin. Ivie, an Austin native and Vietnam veteran, encourages younger veterans to join the American Legion.

Veterans trade stories at Austin gathering

Former military members celebrate their time in service

By Faith Bugenhagen
STAFF WRITER

Veterans wearing beige vests with military service patches gathered onstage Wednesday at Westminster, an Austin senior living community, swapping stories about their time stationed across the country and overseas as a live band played.

The group, Westminster's Veteran Corps, formed in 2012. While its members connect about life beyond their military service, on Veterans Day they were there to celebrate and reflect on their time in uniform.

"I was from the city. I had never shot a rifle before — obviously, not from Texas," Berny Schiff, a U.S. Army veteran, joked to the crowd.

Schiff served from 1964 to 1968 during the Cold War. He recalled being sta-

Veterans continues on A2



Members of Westminster's Veteran Corps reflected on their time in uniform during Wednesday's ceremony.

"All I could think about was, 'Is this the beginning of World War III?' "

Berny Schiff, a U.S. Army veteran, recalling an incident overseas

White House warns against probes

Democrats have said they will investigate Trump, his family

By Darlene Superville, Seung Min Kim and Joey Cappelletti
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The White House has issued a warning to Democrats over their planned probes into the Trump administration, going as far as claiming that such investigations — a standard oversight function of Congress — may amount to "blatant criminality."

White House counsel Will Scharf issued the warning in a letter dated Monday to Rep. Robert Garcia, the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee.

Garcia most likely would chair the powerful panel in the new Democratic-controlled Congress that is seated in January. Garcia warned Trump officials to "lawyer up" as his party was on the way to stunning victories in last week's midterm election.

In response, Scharf wrote that "threats to executive branch officials designed to deter them from public service, or process designed merely to abuse or instill fear in the recipient may cross the line into blatant criminality." The letter's existence was first reported by Punchbowl News.

It's just the latest shot across the bow as the White House prepares to square off against newly empowered Democrats in the House and Senate next year, a showdown with major implications for congressional authority and the balance of power between the branches of government.

Outside the Capitol on Wednesday, Garcia told reporters that "Donald Trump is clearly hiding something" and that Democrats "are not going to be threatened or intimidated."

"The truth is that he needs to understand that Congress is a coequal branch of government," Garcia said.

He doubled down on his "lawyer up" post after the election, saying the White House was "thin-skinned" and couldn't "take any sort of heat."

"If you have abused the American public, you should lawyer up," Garcia said. "If you're a corporate CEO and you're ripping off the American people, you

Probes continues on A4

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Photos by Sara Diggins/Austin American-Statesman

Army veteran Ervin Coonrod escorts the flags out of the room following the Veterans Day ceremony at Westminster senior living community in Austin.

VETERANS

From page A1

tioned around the country and overseas, including at Fort Hood in Killeen. He specialized in artillery. After the Army rejected him for Officer Candidate School because of his eyesight, he was sent to Germany.

While overseas, Schiff recalled being jolted awake by an alarm at 2 a.m.

"All I could think about was, 'Is this the beginning of World War III?' " he recalled. He and his fellow soldiers followed their training as a missile was raised halfway, then waited anxiously to learn whether they would fire it or lower it.

"You know the answer because you never heard of an atomic explosion in Eastern Europe," he said.

After leaving field operations, Schiff said he was finally accepted into OCS, which he said had opened the program to more applicants during the Vietnam War. By then, he had risen to the rank of private.

Schiff said he believes younger generations should be required to serve for at least two years, saying that military service bonded him with people he otherwise might never have met.

Walter Ivie, an Austin native and Vietnam veteran, recalled how much of his platoon's time in Vietnam was spent in the field.



The Red Dawg Trio performs a medley of songs during the Veterans Day event. The veterans also gathered Wednesday to accept a $5,498 check for American Legion Post 76. The money was raised at a pancake breakfast at Westminster and matched by the senior living community.

"After about a week to 10 days in the field, we did one night back at the base camp, and we had to go back and help," Ivie said.

Ivie trained at bases around the country. He said his favorite training was with the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas. He later went to Vietnam with his platoon, serving as its leader.

In Vietnam, Ivie said, his platoon was asked to test-fire a mortar from an LCM-8, a landing craft commonly called a "Mike Boat."

"We fired it off in the middle of the ocean," Ivie said.

Ivie left for OCS in 1966. After graduating, he attended airborne school and "jumped out of airplanes for a while."

"The first one was tough," Ivie added. "After that I figured it out."

Ivie, a guest at Wednesday's event, later held several roles with the American Legion, one of the country's largest veterans organizations. He was the past state commander for the American Legion Post 76. He traveled across all 50 states and abroad. At one point, he spent 58 days in 58 hotels and was on the road for 340 days in a single year.

He wants to encourage younger veterans to join the Legion.

"Some of the military people getting out now have served for several years, and the transition back to being a citizen again, working the private sector, is really hard for some of them," Ivie said. "They don't seem to have the assistance that they would."

After his military service, Ivie attended the University of Texas, graduating with honors from its business school. He worked for PricewaterhouseCoopers in Dallas, then returned to UT to earn a doctorate in accounting. He joked that he wasn't a "normal accountant."

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Thursday, **Nov. 12,** the 316th day of 2026. There are 49 days left in the year.

Today's highlight: On **Nov. 12, 1954,** Ellis Island officially closed as an immigration station and detention center. More than 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States via Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954.

Also on this date: In **1927,** Josef Stalin became the undisputed ruler of the Soviet Union as Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party.

In **1936,** the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge opened as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a telegraph key in Washington, D.C., and gave the green light to traffic.

In **1936,** American playwright Eugene O'Neill received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In **1948,** Japanese general and former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo and several other World War II Japanese leaders were sentenced to death by a war-crimes tribunal; Tojo was executed in December 1948.

In **1970,** the Bhola cyclone struck East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The deadliest tropical cyclone on record claimed the lives of an estimated 300,000-500,000 people.

In **2001,** American Airlines Flight 587, en route to the Dominican Republic, crashed after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, killing all 260 people on board and five people on the ground.

In **2019,** Venice saw its worst flooding in more than 50 years, with the water reaching 6.14 feet above average sea level; damage was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

In **2021,** a judge in Los Angeles ended the conservatorship that had controlled the life and money of pop star Britney Spears for nearly 14 years.

In **2024,** Jack Teixeira, a Massachusetts Air National Guard member, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for leaking classified military documents about the war in Ukraine. Nearly a year after his April 2023 arrest, Teixeira had pleaded guilty to willful retention and transmission of national defense information under the Espionage Act.

Today's birthdays: Actor-playwright Wallace Shawn is 83. Rock musician Booker T. Jones is 82. Sportscaster Al Michaels is 82. Singer-songwriter Neil Young is 81. Actor Megan Mullally is 68. Olympic gold medal gymnast Nadia Comaneci is 65. Former American figure skater Tonya Harding is 56. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jason Lezak is 51. Pakistani filmmaker and journalist Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy is 48. Actor Ryan Gosling is 46. Actor Anne Hathaway is 44. Golfer Jason Day is 39. MotoGP star Marco Bezzecchi is 28. NBA All-Star Paolo Banchero is 24.

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POSTAL INFORMATION
The Austin American-Statesman (ISSN 0199-8560) is published daily excluding Saturday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (observed), Christmas Day (observed) and New Year's Day (observed) by Hearst Newspapers, 8000 Metropolis Drive, Building A, Suite 100, Austin, TX 78744. Periodicals postage paid at Austin, TX.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Austin American-Statesman, 8000 Metropolis Drive, Building A, Suite 100, Austin, TX 78744.