

to create far more positive externalities than negative externalities, but like it or not, we are going to cause some negatives. Our political processes are the same way. Every policy decision has positives and negatives. A tax cut takes away money from spending on public projects, but it also returns money to the taxpayers. Social programs provide a safety net to our society, but they also cost money that must come from taxes on the citizens.

This is not complicated, but unfortunately, in our society, it has somehow become toxic. If you oppose tax cuts, you hate business. If you favor tax cuts, you're greedy. If you support expanding social programs, you want a government nanny state. If you oppose expanding social programs, you hate poor people. If you think I am exaggerating, just watch cable news or check out the emails and mailers from political campaigns.

Unfortunately, I have been afflicted with the understanding that two things can be true at once. I don't see everything as a battle between good and evil. I realize that most policy conversations are more complicated. Whether it is tax cuts, social programs, or some other issue, there are positives and negatives to each side of

the argument. We might have a difference of opinion on what constitutes the positives and the negatives, but we should talk those out and figure out where we have common ground. After we do that, then we can talk out the areas where our opinions differ.

Sometimes, those of us in agricultural and/or rural constituencies do a terrible job of acknowledging the positives and negatives of our issues. Our positions get assailed by folks who come from a differing background or who may not understand our way of life at all (like that New York Times column) and we respond defensively. That is human nature, but our current discourse encourages us to view everything on that good/evil spectrum and we fall prey to that temptation. Very few things in our political and social discourse are ACTUALLY on the extreme end of that good/evil spectrum. Most topics are somewhere in between. And in reality, most of us live somewhere in between. We would be in a heap of trouble if success in the world required us to be completely good. Instead, we are a product of all of our decisions. Some decisions are good and inevitably some are bad. Our goal should be for the good to outweigh the bad and as we mature and grow in life, we



**Fighting Fire!** At 2:18 pm on Saturday, August 8, 2020, Robert Lee Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to a grass fire on Ranch Road 2059, also known as the Silver Highway. RLVFD received assistance from other local volunteer fire departments, including Bronte, Sterling City, and Water Valley, as well as the Coke County Sheriff's Office, and the Texas Forest Service. The fire burned a total of 282 acres before it was contained. Photo courtesy of Monica Harris.

should want the bad portion to shrink and the good portion to expand.

So if you're reading this and you're struggling with the weight of your bad decisions, just remember that you are the product of ALL your decisions and don't let Satan tell you

otherwise. And if you are just as frustrated as I am with the idea that political discussions should be more than shouting about good or evil, remember that two things can be true at once. Let's be willing to have more intelligent conversations about ideas and the positive and

negative externalities that arise from each decision.

*James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, Texas, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.*



### July 2020

Sheriff's Information Report - 2  
Missing Livestock - 1  
Welfare Concern - 1  
Mental Health Welfare Check - 1  
Recovery of a Stolen Vehicle - 1  
Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle (Recovered) - 1  
Assault Family Violence - 1  
Resisting Arrest - 1

Terroristic Threat - 1  
Debit/Credit Card Abuse - 1  
Warrant Arrest - 2  
Public Service (includes funerals, court, motorist assist, alarm calls, etc) - 544  
Civil Process - 1  
Prisoner Transport (including arrest and to and from court) - 12  
Arrests - 5  
Livestock Calls - 23  
Accidents - 1  
Accident Assist - 10  
Blue Forms Issued - 4  
Traffic Stops - 158  
Traffic Stops Resulting in Citations - 120  
Total inmates in Runnels County Jail as of Monday, August 10:  
Males - 4  
Females - 2

## Campaign brings awareness to distracted driving

Despite stay at home orders and less traffic the past few months, Texas has continued to see about the same amount of fatalities on our state's roadways. In an effort to reach drivers more creatively about the dangers of distracted driving, TxDOT has launched a new web-based augmented reality (AR) game that reinforces the importance of paying attention behind the wheel and reminds drivers to keep their heads up. Around 1 in 5 crashes on Texas roads are caused by distracted driving and all of them are

preventable.

This new AR game "Dart Those Distractions" is designed to increase awareness about the dangers of distracted driving in an interactive, engaging way that resonates with all ages. Inspired by a classic carnival game, players will throw darts over a car windshield to hit balloons symbolizing driving distractions like eating, programming music or navigation and self-grooming. This is an important reminder that distracted driving isn't just about texting or talking from the driver's seat.

"Every driver and every passenger can be impacted by distracted driving and one death is one too many," TxDOT Executive Director James Bass said. "We are doing all we can to make sure every Texan knows the dangers of driving distracted. Distracted driving crashes are preventable and we hope this new AR game will help drivers realize there are more dangers than just your cell phone in the car."

TxDOT will promote the "Heads up, Texas" campaign and new AR game through social media, social influencers and digital advertising.

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## And Don't Forget to Pray for Rain!