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# Southern DAILY

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## Mexico President-Elect Writes to Trump About Migration, NAFTA

Mexico's President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sent a letter to U.S. President Donald Trump, seeking to initiate "a new stage in the relationship" of the two countries and to make progress in the areas of "trade, migration, development and security." The letter urge a swift end to NAFTA negotiations and suggesting the leaders could work well together due to their shared "anti-establishment style", Mexican officials said on Sunday.

The letter was delivered during a recent meeting in Mexico with senior U.S. officials, and details were disclosed once Trump had received it, said Lopez Obrador, a leftist who won Mexico's July 1 presidential election in a landslide. Lopez Obrador handed the seven-page letter to a U.S. delegation that visited the country on July 13. Marcelo Ebrard, foreign minister-designate, read the letter to reporters on Sunday, and said Trump had received the letter. In the letter, Lopez Obrador said that the incoming administration's aim was to "start a new chapter in the relationship between Mexico and the United States, based on mutual respect."

In the letter, Lopez Obrador said Mexico is home to the largest number of Americans living outside the U.S. and "the United States is the largest home for Mexicans outside of our borders."

"I believe that the understanding that I propose in this letter should lead us to a worthy and respectful treatment of these communities," he said.

Lopez Obrador suggested creating a development plan that included other Central American countries, where migrants also live in poverty and lack job opportunities. He suggested that if the U.S.,



Mexico's president-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador gestures during a news conference in Mexico City, Mexico July 22, 2018. (Photo/REUTERS)

Mexico and other Central American countries, "each one contributing according to the size of its economy, we could gather a considerable amount of resources for the development of the region."

The plan, according to the president-elect, would spend 75 percent of its funds on "projects to create jobs and fight poverty" and 25 percent on border control and security.

"In this way, I reiterate, we would be addressing the causes that originate the migration phenomenon," he said in the letter.

Lopez Obrador said his government hopes to improve the economy and security of the country "to ensure that Mexicans do not have to migrate because of poverty or violence."

He also urged that the U.S., Mexico and Canada resume North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations.

some of his government's plans, such as public investment and development in the agricultural, energy, education, cultural and health sectors. (Courtesy voanews.com)

### Mexican Leftist Appeals To 'Anti-Establishment' Trump, Seeks NAFTA Deal

Mexican President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sent U.S. President Donald Trump a letter urging a swift end to NAFTA negotiations and suggesting the leaders could work well together due to their shared anti-establishment style, Mexican officials said on Sunday.

Trump has had harsh words for Mexico on trade and immigration throughout his presidency. Despite their contrasting political views, Lopez Obrador indicated he was optimistic about his working relationship with Trump.

"I am encouraged by the fact that we both know how to do what we say, and we have both faced adversity with success," Lopez Obrador wrote. "We manage to put our voters and citizens at the center and displace the establishment."

Lopez Obrador, who takes office on Dec. 1, also called for the countries to redouble their efforts to wrap up talks to modernize the 24-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

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"Prolonging the uncertainty could stop investment in the medium and long-term, which clearly would challenge economic growth," Lopez Obrador wrote in the letter.

Talks to overhaul NAFTA began nearly a year ago after Trump called for the agreement to be reworked to better serve U.S. interests.

The negotiations, which had effectively stalled as Canada and Mexico struggled to accommodate U.S. demands for major changes, will resume in Washington on Thursday.

Former World Trade Organization economist Jesus Seade will accompany the Mexican delegation as Lopez Obrador's representative, Ebrard said.

Lopez Obrador singled out migration, development and security as prime areas of potential collaboration in his letter to Trump.

He reiterated to Trump his interest in working in depth on the problem of migration, through a development plan that would include Central American countries.

"My government is willing to present to our Congress ... the initiative and budgetary proposal to contribute economic resources and experiences in this joint effort," he wrote. (Courtesy Reuters)

### As Violence Soars, Mexico's New Leader to Take Charge of Security

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MEXICO CITY—Mexican President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador plans to leverage his strong political mandate to tackle the rampant violence ravaging the country, according to a top aide.

Mr. López Obrador intends to take personal command of Mexico's security strategy, rein in errant state governors and eradicate the corruption that fuels violence, said Alfonso Durazo, a veteran politician who the president-elect has chosen to head a new Public Security Ministry after the Dec. 1 inauguration.

Messrs. López Obrador and Durazo are taking on a daunting challenge. Violence exploded in Mexico after 2006, when the government declared war on powerful drug cartels that control swaths of the nation's territory. In 2017, there were close to 30,000 homicides, the most since modern records began in 1997.

Polls identified the rise in violence and corruption as being among the main reasons that more than 53% of Mexican voters cast their ballots on July 1 for Mr. López Obrador. The overwhelming victory gives him the political capital to exact cooperation from Mexico's governors, Mr. Durazo said in an interview.

Alfonso Durazo, the president-elect's choice to head a new Public Security Ministry, speaking in Mexico City earlier this month. (PHOTO/ZUMA PRESS)

"We have exceptional conditions, and we are betting on that," he said. While the new government will work on improving police capabilities, Mr. Durazo said, "the political will of López Obrador is essential and almost enough to end corruption and violence."

The lack of policy details, however, has rendered some experts skeptical. Mr. López Obrador has said he would create a National Guard as the main weapon to fight crime, but has offered no specifics on the plan. Beginning

next month, Mr. Durazo is set to coordinate a series of seminars in different parts of the country to discuss security policy.

Meanwhile, observers say criminal violence remains on a rising trend. There were 18% more homicides in the first half of 2018 than in the same period last year. And in the past, changes of administration at the state and municipal levels have often led to spikes in criminal violence as links sever between corrupt officials and criminal organizations.



Police officers standing guard the day after an attack in May against government officials eating in a restaurant, in which seven people were wounded. (PHOTO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES)

"There are deeply rooted institutional problems that need a system redesign," said Alejandro Hope, a security analyst and former Mexican intelligence officer. "The idea that López Obrador's mandate will force change by itself is naive."

A dozen former governors of Mexican states have been convicted, arrested or indicted on charges including embezzlement, racketeering and money laundering in recent years, as violence has engulfed their states.

As part of his strategy, Mr. López Obrador has said he would hold a daily 6 a.m. meeting with his team to review security across Mexico and carry out a unified anticrime plan.

"This sends an important signal that the president is taking political responsibility for the strategy and its results," said Eduardo Guerrero, a security consultant in Mexico City.

Mr. Durazo said the new government "will persuade" the nation's 32 governors to follow the president's lead and hold similar early-morning meetings with their security staff in an effort to strengthen accountability. (Courtesy <https://www.wsj.com/articles>)



Mexico's president-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, right, flanked by his future foreign minister, Marcelo Ebrard, speaks to the press outside party headquarters in Mexico City, Mexico, July 22, 2018.

"Prolonging the uncertainty could slow down investments in the medium and long-term," he said.

Lopez Obrador, who won the nation's presidential election on July 1, will take office in December. He also used his letter to explain

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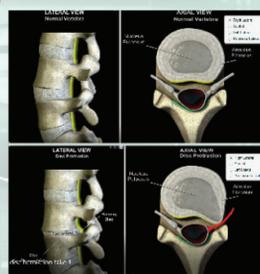
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# Man Dies Of Bacteria That Caused Flesh-Eating Disease After Eating Raw Oysters — Here's What You Need To Know

A 71-year-old man in Florida died on July 10 after being infected by bacteria that can cause serious gastrointestinal illness and rarely flesh-eating disease (necrotizing fasciitis) from eating a contaminated raw oyster, according to local news reports.

The man ate the bad oyster at a Sarasota restaurant two days before succumbing to gastrointestinal illness.

The Florida Department of Health told the Sun Sentinel that the oyster was contaminated with the bacteria *Vibrio vulnificus*, an organism that can cause severe and potentially fatal illness. These bacteria thrive in warm, salty water, which is why infections tend to happen more in the summer.

People can be infected by eating contaminated seafood or by wading in water with the bacteria if they have open cuts.

Less than two weeks after a life changing flesh-eating disease left him with one foot, Raul Reyes was back at work teaching toddlers.

There are approximately a dozen different types of *Vibrio* bacteria that can trigger various forms of a gastrointestinal illness known as vibriosis. Most cases are unpleasant but resolve within a few days, but rare infections from the species *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause a "flesh-eating" or necrotizing fasciitis condition that kills up to 30% of those infected.

This bacteria is known to thrive in warm, salty water, which is why it can be found in shellfish, especially in the summer.

The elderly and those with underlying health conditions are particularly vulnerable to these infections.

## Vibriosis And Flesh-Eating Bacteria

There are approximately 80,000 vibriosis infections in the US every year, according to the CDC. Estimates suggest 52,000 of those cases are likely the result of eating contaminated food, especially raw seafood. About 80% of those infections occur between May and Octo-



A Florida man died on July 10 after eating a raw oyster at a Sarasota restaurant that was contaminated by the bacteria *Vibrio vulnificus*, which can cause flesh-eating disease, or necrotizing fasciitis.

ber, when water is particularly warm — ideal for colonies of bacteria to grow and thrive.

The vast majority of vibriosis infections result in symptoms typical of a foodborne illness: cramping, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever, and chills.

But the species the Florida man consumed, *Vibrio vulnificus*, is more dangerous, though it only rarely causes serious disease. This infection can cause blistering skin lesions, bloodstream infections, and necrotizing fasciitis (flesh-eating disease, which causes soft tissue to die) if a wound gets infected. But it's very rare; the CDC estimates that there are about 205 cases in the US every year. There have been 16 confirmed cases in Florida so far this year, with three fatalities.

When treatment is possible, understanding that flesh-eating disease has been caused by *Vibrio* is important, since it's treated differently

from other bacteria. Other bacteria can cause flesh-eating disease as well — in fact, *Vibrio* bacteria are far less likely to cause these infections than group A *Streptococcus* bacteria and certain other types. But flesh-eating disease is one of the most common signs of *Vibrio vulnificus*, according to one CDC study.

## Risky Oysters In Brackish Water

According to the CDC, there's no way to know if an oyster carries bacteria like *Vibrio*. One study conducted by the Florida state health office found the infection was the leading cause of death from foodborne illness between 1981 and 1992. During that time there were at least 72 infections, mostly caused by eating raw oysters, and 36 deaths. Last year, Florida had 49 infections, and 11 deaths.

These bacteria thrive in brackish water — water that's salty, but not quite at seawater levels, which is where oysters are often harvested from. People can also contract the bacteria if they wade in water and have any open wounds. Hurricane floodwaters after Harvey resulted in at least one fatality from flesh-eating bacteria and there were several *Vibriodeaths* after Katrina.

For people with serious vibriosis, antibiotics can treat some cases. Other cases result in amputations or death. People with liver conditions

are much more likely to get severely ill.

The CDC and other health departments have warned that the only way to kill bacteria is to properly cook oysters. Warmer waters (which are becoming more common) make raw oysters riskier to consume, Bill Marler, a lawyer who focuses on food poisoning cases, previously told Business Insider. That fact was enough to convince him never to eat raw shellfish.

Still, these cases are rare. Whether or not wading in partially salty water or eating raw seafood are worth the risk is an individual decision. (Courtesy Business Insider)

## Related

### Gulf Coast Beach Water Advisories

NOTE: Texas Beach Watch advisories are NOT related to *Vibrio vulnificus* "flesh-eating" bacteria. For information about *Vibrio vulnificus*, please visit this page.

Texas Beach Watch (Enterococcus Bacteria) About Texas Beach Watch The Galveston County Health District (GCHD) participates in a federal program that tests hundreds of recreational swimming sites in the United States. The program, known as Texas Beach Watch in our state, tests for a bacterial indicator called Enterococcus. The bacteria is common in rain runoff and levels often spike after periods of heavy rain. GCHD routinely tests 52 beach sites through the program. When a sample shows the level of Enterococ-

cus above the EPA standard for safe swimming, an advisory is issued for the beach corresponding to that testing site. Sites with elevated levels are tested daily until the level comes down, which typically takes approximately 48 hours. Galveston County advisories are indicated with a sign on the beach and online at TexasBeachWatch.com and www.gchd.org.

When an advisory is issued, the affected beach is not closed. An advisory is issued to inform the public of the elevated bacteria level so people can make an informed choice about swimming in the affected waters. Avoiding advisories is as simple as moving to a beach a few blocks away from those affected.

Precautions People with diabetes, liver disease, cancer or other immune suppressing conditions who swim in natural bodies of water with open cuts or sores are at an increased risk for infection. Healthy people are extraordinarily less likely to get an infection than the ill. Swimming in natural bodies of water anywhere comes with risk. To reduce it, beachgoers with open cuts or sores, especially those with pre-existing conditions, should avoid swimming or check with their doctor first.

People who suffer cuts while in natural bodies of water anywhere should immediately leave the water, thoroughly clean the wound and do not return until the wound heals. It's important to keep an eye on the area for infection or swelling. If either occur, medical attention should be obtained immediately. (Courtesy http://www.gchd.org/public-health-services)

### Wound Infections from *V. vulnificus*

- Results when skin lacerations or abrasions come into direct contact with seawater that contains Vv
- Infections usually begin with redness, swelling and intense pain around the infected site
- Often fluid-filled blisters develop and progress to tissue necrosis. Can resemble gas gangrene
- About 50% of patients with Vv wounds will require surgery or amputation

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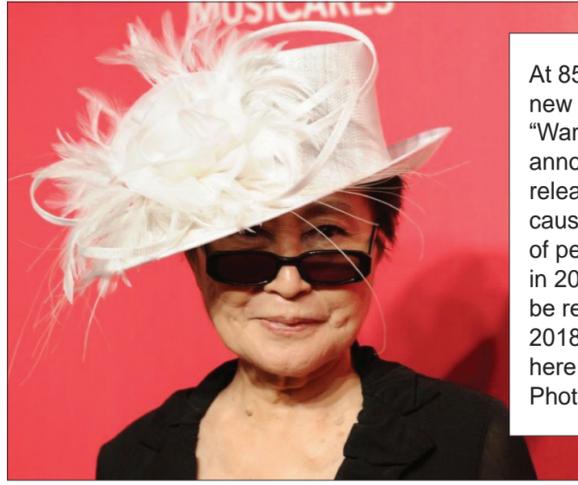
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EDITOR'S CHOICE PICTURES



Actor and comedian Bill Cosby exits Montgomery County Courthouse after a jury convicted him in a sexual assault retrial in Norristown, Pennsylvania, U.S., April 26, 2018. A Pennsylvania state advisory board recommended that Bill Cosby be deemed a "sexually violent predator," requiring that the convicted comedian undergo counseling as well as register as a sex offender for life, prosecutors said on Tuesday. (Photo/REUTERS)



At 85, Yoko Ono plans a new album for peace called "WarZone." Ono on Tuesday announced that she is releasing the new album because her lifelong message of peace was sorely needed in 2018. The new album will be released on October 19, 2018. Yoko Ono is pictured here in 2012. (Photo/AFP Photo)



President Trump Responds To Letter From Mexico's President-Elect Lopez-Obrador. In the letter released Tuesday, the president told Andres Manuel Lopez-Obrador that speedy NAFTA negotiations will be prosperous for both countries — bringing jobs and higher wages. The letter to his Mexican counterpart said that he's (the president) "looking forward" to working together with Mexico.



Sen. Mitch McConnell Threatens Moscow With New Sanctions. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY, (right) joined at left by Majority Whip John Cornyn, R-Texas, speaks to the media on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, July 17, 2018. McConnell is threatening Moscow with additional sanctions in an effort to deter future election meddling. (Photo/AP)



U.S. and South Korean defense officials met in Seoul Wednesday to discuss progress made between the allies and North Korea, following last month's Singapore summit. South Korea plans to reduce troops along its northern border and wants to scale back military posts along its border with the north in the Demilitarized Zone.



Made In China: Trump Re-Election Flags May Get Burned By His Tariffs. Flags for U.S. President Donald Trump's "Keep America Great!" 2020 re-election campaign are seen at Jiahao flag factory in Fuyang, Anhui province, in eastern China July 24, 2018. The red, white and blue banners for U.S. President Donald Trump's second-term campaign are ready to ship, emblazoned with the words, "Keep America Great!" But they could be hit by punitive tariffs of Trump's own making as he ratchets up a rancorous trade dispute with Beijing.



China Has Pulled Approval For Facebook's Planned Venture. The Chinese government has withdrawn its approval for Facebook Inc's <FB.O> plan to open a venture in the eastern province of Zhejiang, the New York Times reported on Wednesday, citing a person familiar with the matter. Facebook said on Tuesday it had planned to create an "innovation hub" to support local start-ups. The subsidiary was registered in Hangzhou, according to a filing approved on China's National Enterprise Credit Information Publicity System last week and seen by Reuters on Tuesday. A Chinese government database showed that Facebook had gained approval to open a subsidiary. The registration has since disappeared, according to checks made by Reuters. Facebook could not be immediately reached for comment.



Iran Will Never Take Part In One-Sided Talks With U.S. Under Threat: Ministry. Iran will never take part in one-sided negotiations with the United States under threat, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman said Wednesday, according to the Tasnim news agency. "America should forget forever the idea of one-sided negotiations under the shadow of a threat," spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

What does it take to get into a new home in Houston area cities right now? A recent report shows a snapshot of the average list price in various Houston neighborhoods, based on current listings from the **Houston Association of Realtors**. Across Texas, prices are rising fast, according to Fiscal Notes, a publication from the Texas Comptroller's office. "Rising costs associated with building have made the development of moderately priced housing difficult and less profitable for homebuilders," author Courtney King writes in the publication's March issue. "As a result, single-family home construction is skewing away from 'entry-level' housing and toward larger, more expensive — and more profitable — homes." The median home price in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land area for 2017 was \$233,386, the comptroller's office reports. The report identifies entry-level homes as those that cost \$200,000 or less. The average home price in Houston was about \$290,000 for 2017, Chron.com previously reported. Texas A&M's Real Estate Center also highlighted a shortage of homes priced below \$300,000 in a May 2018 report posted online June 29. "Inventory levels showed signs of relief as new listings came to market, but structural supply issues persist. Homebuilders are grappling with increased land, labor, and lumber costs, as well as increased regulations."

**Related**

For years, Texas has built a reputation as a place where families can live well for less, with several of its metropolitan areas consistently ranked among the nation's most affordable. The economic success of our cities is changing that picture, however, and according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the rise in Texas home prices has outpaced that of the nation as a whole since 2011.

**New Home Construction in Texas**

Similarly, a recent Texas A&M Real Estate Center study indicates that Texas housing prices have been rising faster than the state's



personal income. These rapid price increases aren't occurring uniformly throughout the state, of course, but in all they may reduce Texas' traditional cost of living advantage.

"On the demand side, Texas home prices are currently driven by the state's growing economy," says Dr. Ali Anari, research economist at the Texas A&M Real Estate Center. "Texas cre-

# What It Takes To Get Into A New Home In Houston-Area Cities

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



New Home Buyers

ated jobs at an annual rate of 2.5 percent from December 2016 to December 2017 — higher than the nation's employment growth rate of 1.4 percent."

Texas also continues to experience explosive population growth, gaining nearly 1,100 people per day. According to recent Census estimates, four of the nation's five fastest-growing large cities (those with 50,000 or more residents) are in Texas — Conroe, Frisco, McKinney and Georgetown, all of them located within the state's largest metropolitan areas.

**Rising Building Costs**

Texas homebuilders are struggling to meet the strong demand for affordable single-family homes. One problem they face has been a lack of skilled construction workers following the housing bust of the Great Recession. Between 2007 and 2013, the nation's builders lost more than 2 million workers, and only 40 percent of them ultimately returned to the industry. The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas reports that Texas' residential construction job count fell more than total employment during the recession, and took more time to rebound. The shortage of carpenters, masons and other skilled workers led to higher wages, which increase the bottom-line price of homes. And construction worker pay is rising much faster in Texas than in the nation as a whole. Inflation-adjusted average hourly earnings in Texas' construction sector rose by more than 20 percent between 2011 and 2016, versus just 4.7 percent for the

U.S. construction sector — and nearly four times the 5.9 percent growth in Texas' total average private-sector earnings.

**Dr. Ali Anari Research Economist, Texas A&M Real Estate Center**

The cost of land itself is another factor. "Land costs account for 20.4 percent of Texas home prices, historically the highest percentage [we've seen] and up from 14.1 percent in 2000," Anari says. And Texas' land price index, a measure of the extent to which land prices change over time, indicates prices are increasing quickly.



"Since 2000, the Texas land price index for single-family homes has increased by 122 percent, compared with 95 percent nationally," he says. Government regulation plays a role as well. According to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, many Texas cities have reacted to rapid growth by enacting strict zoning codes — ordinances controlling land use and construction — that remove tracts of land from development, driving up demand and prices.

Where building can take place, the cost of regulatory compliance contributes to higher prices. Such costs can include permit, hookup and "impact" fees, environmental surveys, requirements for specific building materials and much more — all well-intentioned, but all adding to the bottom line.

A 2016 study by the National Association of Home Builders estimated government regulations account for nearly a quarter (24.3 percent) of the final price of an average new single-family home. And between 2011 and 2016, these regulatory costs rose by nearly 30 percent, while the nation's per capita disposable income increased by just 14.4 percent. In other words, regulatory costs are rising more than twice as fast as the average American's ability to pay for a home. Rising costs associated with building have made the development



**National Association of Home Builders**

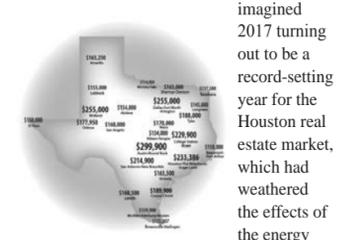
of moderately priced housing difficult and less profitable for homebuilders. As a result, single-family home construction is skewing away from "entry-level" housing and toward larger, more expensive — and more profitable — homes. The stock of entry-level homes is most limited in the state's major metropolitan areas, although an abundance of homes is available at higher price points. According to the Real Estate Center, sales of homes priced from \$300,000 to \$399,000 have been rising since 2012, while sales of homes priced below \$200,000 have been either flat or declining. Again, however, this is primarily a phenomenon of the state's largest metropolitan areas, as recent price data indicate (**Exhibit 1**).

**EXHIBIT 1: MEDIAN PRICES, NEW AND EXISTING SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES, 2017**

**Houston's average home list price is roughly \$290,000.**

Custom home sales hit some record highs last year despite the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey. Single-family home sales rose throughout the metro area when compared to the year before, especially among homes priced between \$250,000 and \$500,000, according to the Houston Association of Realtors. The median home price in town

rose 1.7 percent to \$230,000. However, the average Houston home price declined by 0.6 percent, to \$292,174. (See what this average home price buys in the Houston by touring the properties above.) "No one could ever have



imagined 2017 turning out to be a record-setting year for the Houston real estate market, which had weathered the effects of the energy slump only to have Harvey strike such a devastating blow," said HAR Chair Kenya Burrell-VanWormer with JP Morgan Chase. "We know that many are still working tirelessly to rebuild their lives after Harvey, but overall, this clearly illustrates the incredible resilience of the people and the economy of Houston, Texas," Burrell-VanWormer said. "We also know that some neighborhoods are performing better than others, so it's always advisable to consult a realtor when thinking about buying or selling a home."



**Custom home sales hit record highs last year despite the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey.**

In 2018, the housing market is starting out with a lower inventory, due in part to those still seeking to replace Harvey-ravaged homes. Harvey originally posed an immediate concern for locals who lost their jobs and faced costly repairs, it also impacted inventory. However, HAR report that the market rebounded just a month later, with sales ticking up. As for rental activity, it hit an all-time high. "The positive momentum continued through the final months of 2017," an HAR spokesperson said in a release. "On a year-to-date basis, the average price rose 2.9 percent to \$291,340 while the median price increased 3.8 percent to \$229,900. Total dollar volume for full-year 2017 jumped 6.5 percent to \$23 billion. (Courtesy chron.com)

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The MINT National Bank currently has the following position open.

**Executive Assistant to the President of LPO**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Performs a variety of administrative and operational duties in a professional independent environment to support/assist the President of LPO to manage the LPO's day to day core business. Normally, the core business of the LPO consists of packaging of loans, underwriting, pre-approval and post-approval, closing of the loans and managing of the loan portfolio, plus construction loan funding. Managing of the LPO's loan portfolio including but not limited to conducting annual loan review, collecting of loan payments, clearing both of the related financial and documentation exceptions. Hence, there will be a lot of interpersonal activities and project/loan case management as well.

**OTHER DUTIES INCLUDE**

- ✓ Assist with various bank deposits account opening in accordance with the instructions from the Bank's Kingwood office
- ✓ Accept other duties as deemed necessary by the President of the LPO in accordance with the Bank's policy.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

- ✓ College degree preferable in accounting, finance or other business majors. Will consider other majors if proficient in IT area.
- ✓ proficient with Microsoft applications such as Outlook, Word, Excel, Power Point, and some basic understanding of Access is a must.
- ✓ 1-2 years' experience in loan administration preferred but not mandatory.
- ✓ Strong organization skills, able to work independently and flexibly have maturity and experience in dealing with people and complex situations.
- ✓ Strong willingness to learn and work hard
- ✓ Strong verbal and written communication skills, and detail oriented
- ✓ bilingual in English and Mandarin/Cantonese is a must

Interested Party please e-mail your resume to [ringo.kwan@themintbank.com](mailto:ringo.kwan@themintbank.com)



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WASHINGTON (AP) — States will be able to force shoppers to pay sales tax when they make online purchases under a Supreme Court decision Thursday that will leave shoppers with lighter wallets but is a big win for states.

More than 40 states had asked the high court to overrule two, decades-old Supreme Court decisions that they said cost them billions of dollars in lost revenue annually. The decisions made it more difficult for states to collect sales tax on certain online purchases. The high court ruled Thursday to overturn those decisions. They had resulted in some companies not collecting sales tax on every online purchase.

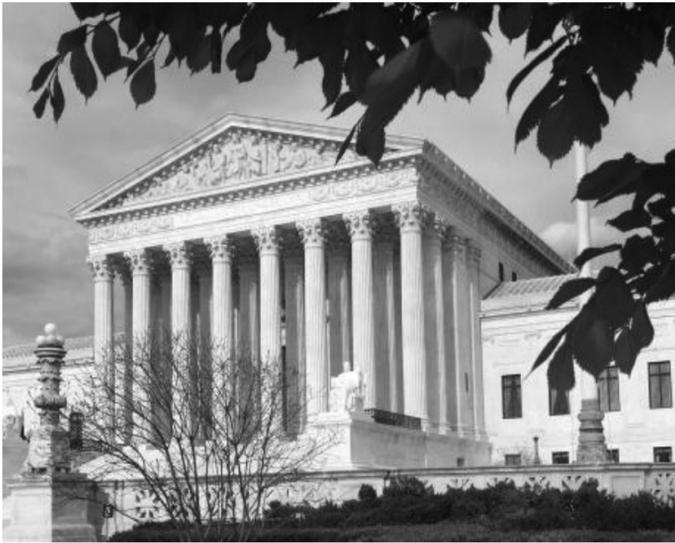
The cases the court overturned said that if a business was shipping a product to a state where it didn't have a physical presence such as a warehouse or office, the business didn't have to collect the state's sales tax. Customers were generally supposed to pay the tax to the state themselves if they don't get charged it, but the vast majority didn't.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court agreed to overturn those decisions in a 5-4 ruling. The cases the court overturned said that if a business was shipping a customer's purchase to a state where the business didn't have a physical presence such as a warehouse or office, the business didn't have to collect the state's sales tax. Customers were generally responsible for paying the sales tax to the state themselves if they weren't charged it, but most didn't realize they owed it and few paid.

In addition to being a win for states, the ruling is also a win for large retailers, who argued the physical presence rule was unfair. Large retailers including Apple, Macy's, Target and Walmart, which have brick-and-mortar stores nationwide, already generally collect sales tax from their customers who buy online. That's because they typically have a physical store in whatever state the purchase is

# Supreme Court: Online Shoppers Can Be Forced To Pay Sales Tax

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



This file photo shows the Supreme Court in Washington, DC. The Supreme Court has ruled that states can force online shoppers to pay sales tax. The 5-4 ruling Thursday is a win for states, who said they were losing out on billions of dollars annually under two decades-old Supreme Court decisions that impacted online sales tax collection. The high court ruled Thursday to overturn those decisions. (Photo/AP)

being shipped to. Amazon.com, with its network of warehouses, also collects sales tax in every state that charges it, though third party sellers who use the site to sell goods don't have to.

But sellers that only have a physical presence in a single state or a few states have been able to avoid charging customers sales tax when they shipped to addresses outside those states. Online sellers that haven't been charging sales tax on goods shipped to every state range from jewelry website Blue Nile to pet products site Chewy.com to clothing retailer L.L. Bean. Sellers who use eBay and Etsy, which provide platforms for smaller sellers, also haven't been collecting sales tax nationwide. Under the Supreme Court's decision Thursday, states can pass laws requiring

sellers without a physical presence in the state to collect the state's sales tax from customers and send it to the state.

The National Retail Federation trade group, said in a statement that the court's decision was a "major victory" but the group said federal legislation is necessary to spell out details on how sales tax collection will take place, rather than leaving it to each of the states to interpret the court's decision.

Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that the previous decisions were flawed.

"Each year the physical presence rule becomes further removed from economic reality and results in significant revenue losses to the States. These critiques underscore that the physical presence rule, both as first formulated and as applied

today, is an incorrect interpretation of the Commerce Clause," he wrote in an opinion joined by Justices Clarence Thomas, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch.

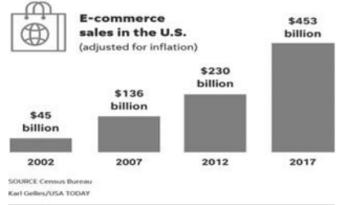


The cases the court overturned said that if a business was shipping a customer's purchase to a state where the business didn't have a physical presence such as a warehouse or office, the business didn't have to collect the state's sales tax. Customers were generally responsible for paying the sales tax to the state themselves if they weren't charged it, but most didn't realize they owed it and few paid.

In addition to being a win for states, the ruling is also a win for large retailers, who argued the physical presence rule was unfair. Retailers including Apple, Macy's, Target and Walmart, which have brick-and-mortar stores nationwide, generally collect sales tax from their customers who buy online. That's because they typically have a physical store in whatever state the purchase is being shipped to. Amazon.com, with its network of warehouses, also collects sales tax in every state that charges it, though third party sellers who use the site to sell goods don't have to.

But sellers that only have a physical presence in a single state or a few states could avoid charging customers sales tax when they're shipping to addresses outside those states. Online sellers that don't charge sales tax on goods shipped to every state range from jewelry website Blue Nile to pet products site Chewy.com to clothing retailer L.L. Bean. Sellers who use eBay and Etsy, which provide platforms for smaller sellers, also aren't

required to collect sales tax nationwide. Chief Justice John Roberts and three of his colleagues would have kept the court's previous decisions in place. Roberts wrote that Congress, not the court, should change the rules if necessary.



"Any alteration to those rules with the potential to disrupt the development of such a critical segment of the economy should be undertaken by Congress," Roberts wrote in a dissent joined by Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor.

The case the court ruled in has to do with a law passed by South Dakota in 2016. South Dakota's governor has said his state has been losing out on an estimated \$50 million a year in sales tax that doesn't get collected by out-of-state sellers. Lawmakers in the state, which has no income tax, passed a law designed to directly challenge the Supreme Court's 1992 decision. The law requires out-of-state sellers who do more than \$100,000 of business in the state or more than 200 transactions annually with state residents to collect sales tax and turn it over to the state.

South Dakota wanted out-of-state retailers to begin collecting the tax and sued several of them: Overstock.com, electronics retailer Newegg and home goods company Wayfair. The state conceded in court, however, that it could only win by persuading the Supreme Court to do away with its physical presence rule. After the decision was announced, shares in Wayfair and Overstock both fell, with Wayfair down more than 3 percent and Overstock down more than 2 percent.

The Trump administration had urged the justices to side with South Dakota.

The case is South Dakota v. Wayfair, 17-494. (Courtesy <https://mtstandard.com/news/nationa> and [www.ocregister.com](http://www.ocregister.com))

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