

# ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGE

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WELDON P. CUDE is the Atascosa County Judge. You may reach him at [countyjudge@co.atascosa.tx.us](mailto:countyjudge@co.atascosa.tx.us).

Last Thursday, Atascosa County residents gathered for a memorable inaugural State of the County event; I must say, it was an amazing experience. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who attended and made this occasion a success. Your presence was truly an honor; it meant the world to me to have your support. During the event, we had the privilege of recognizing and celebrating the outstanding past leadership of Atascosa County. Having the 27th Atascosa County Judge, Deborah Herber, the 29th County Judge, Robert Hurley and past County Commissioners Stuart Knowlton, David Caballero, Bill Torans and Armond Martinez join us was an honor. In addition, past District Judge Lynn Ellison graced us with his presence. Our event was further enhanced by the attendance of distinguished individuals like State Senator Pete Flores, State Representative Tracy O. King, District Judge Jennifer Dillingham, County Court at Law Judge Bob Brendel, District Attorney Audrey Louis, and representatives from U.S. Senator John Cornyn and Congressman Henry Cuellar's office. Their presence and engagement emphasize their support for Atascosa County, and I deeply appreciate their participation. For those unable to attend, we have made the live recording of the event available on the Atascosa County YouTube and Facebook pages so you can catch up on what transpired.

One of the primary objectives of the event was to shed light on the incredible growth that Atascosa County has experienced over the last four decades. We aimed to paint a picture of a time when our county was primarily known for peanut farming and agriculture. During our presentation, we examined the county tax rate, appraisal values, sales tax allocations, and population growth, drawing comparisons between 1983 and the present. We took the opportunity to highlight the invaluable contributions of organizations like the San Miguel Co-op, the impact of the Eagle Ford Shale, the resilience of generational family businesses, and the dedication of local farmers and ranchers who have steadfastly contributed to our economy and government reserves over time. Today, Atascosa County is experiencing a resurgence in energy activities and drilling permits, indicating a consistent production base from the Eagle Ford. We also discussed important changes in internal policies and procedures, including strategies to make county offices more accessible and the establishment of county department advisory boards to enhance community involvement with departmental activities. I want to thank visiting county judges from Medina and McMullen County, representatives from Workforce Solutions Alamo, Texas A&M School of Medicine, and the San Antonio Food Bank for attending our event and for their support. The collaboration of our organizational partners and neighboring county judges means a great deal to me. The current elected officials of Atascosa County and the dedicated department heads present at the event demonstrated their unwavering commitment to supporting the prosperity of our county's success. I would also like to thank the Pleasanton Express for their invaluable assistance in creating awareness about our event and their significant contributions to its success. In addition to our past achievements and the county's growth, we discussed our commitment to support the increasing population with thought-out strategies for infrastructure development. This includes collaboration with our city government, the rural development office, and other stakeholders dedicated to our county's growth. Our intention was to reflect on Atascosa's history and highlight current priorities and projects while offering our assessment of the county's potential for the future. Recognizing the importance of engaging with upcoming generations, we actively support programs to guide our youth toward prosperity and other initiatives connecting students to the county. We have exciting potential projects on our radar, such as the possible creation of a medical examiner's office. Furthermore, we highlighted the remarkable growth that the City of Lytle is experiencing, with projections indicating it will become the most populous city in our county within the next 3-5 years. I wish to thank Ruben Gonzalez, Mayor of Lytle, and Mr. David Emery, Mayor Pro-tem, for attending our event and for their collaborative partnership with the county. Our history holds the key to understanding why and where we are today. It is a testament to the battles fought by past leaders that have brought us to this point. We felt a strong sense of unity and purpose as we honored the past, acknowledged our present, and expressed hope for a bright future for everyone in Atascosa County. To all those who attended this event, I sincerely hope you found it informative and worthwhile. We will aim to continue this effort every year, striving to educate the public about our initiatives and priorities. Remember, we are here to serve you and together, we are Atascosa Proud!