

# Nearly 50 companies to hire Laredoans during job fair

By Jose De La Rosa  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Laredoans currently unemployed or seeking to change careers will have an opportunity to network and interview with potential employers during the Shop Local Initiative and Job Fair.

The event will be held from noon to 3 p.m. Friday, May 10 at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo, located at 1600 Water St.

A press conference revealing details about the job fair was held last week at Workforce Solutions of South Texas, located at 1406 Jacaman Road. Among those in attendance to make the announcement were Laredo Mayor Victor Trevino and Webb County Commissioner of Pct. 2 Rosaura ‘Wawi’ Tijerina.

Workforce Solutions of South Texas Executive Director Rogelio Trevino said the partnership between the agencies doing the job fair was of great significance in fostering economic growth.

“Economic development is pivotal for our community, as it attracts businesses and creates jobs,” Rogelio Trevino said. “As a workforce development agency, we are committed to filling vacancies and meeting the needs of our local businesses and employers.”

Victor Trevino said he was happy to promote economic development of this nature in Laredo, especially as the announcement coincided with National Small Business Week.

“We need to highlight the importance of job creation and business in forming the foundation of our community,” Victor



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

Laredoans will have an opportunity to network and interview with potential employers during the Shop Local Initiative and Job Fair at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo Friday, May 10, 2024. Local leaders are pictured making the announcement of the event at Workforce Solutions of South Texas on May 2, 2024.



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

Laredoans will have an opportunity to network and interview with potential employers during the Shop Local Initiative and Job Fair at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo Friday, May 10, 2024. Pictured is Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Gene A. Lindgren and Webb County Commissioner of Pct. 2 Rosaura ‘Wawi’ Tijerina.

Tijerina said. “That is what keeps our community connected, through jobs, investment and quality of life. It gives hope to our youth to stay in our hometown or come back and run a business.”

Tijerina said the job fair is an important project for Laredo and Webb County. “This project will defi-

nately improve the quality of life for residents here, not only in Laredo but all of Webb County,” Tijerina said. “Job availability is something big in our community because it helps people move up in life. Their self-esteem will increase and allow them to continue doing what they aspire to do.”



Jose De La Rosa/Laredo Morning Times

Laredoans will have an opportunity to network and interview with potential employers during the Shop Local Initiative and Job Fair at The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo Friday, May 10, 2024. Pictured is Workforce Solutions of South Texas Executive Director Rogelio Trevino and Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Gene A. Lindgren.

Laredo Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Gene A. Lindgren said the job fair was made possible through a partnership of numerous local agencies and praised its strength.

“Laredo is blessed to have strong partnerships,” Lindgren said. “It’s our superpower.”

Lindgren said that nearly 50 companies will be present at the job fair to showcase programs and services. Many companies, however, will prioritize offering employment opportunities and even do on-the-spot hiring.

“It’s our pleasure to provide this opportunity to connect these compa-

nies with Laredo’s talented and hard-working individuals,” Lindgren said. “We want to get the word out on this event. We want to see hundreds, if not thousands, of people come into the job fair to find employment or improve their career.”

Among the employers who will reportedly be present include:

- ACME Employment Inc.
- Amigo Staffing Consultants.
- Arguindegui Oil Co.
- Bastion Security.
- Concentrix.
- Elite Employment Services.
- Embassy Suites Hotel.
- HR Plus.
- Laredo Job Corps.
- LJA Engineering.
- OPR Jobs.
- RMPersonnel.
- Spherion Staffing.
- Talise Development.
- Terracon.
- United Independent School District.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- Vexus Fiber.

The event is a collaboration between the Laredo Economic Development Corporation, Workforce Solutions of South Texas, City of Laredo Economic Development Department, Webb County Economic Development Department, Laredo Chamber of Commerce and Laredo College. It’s sponsored by The Outlet Shoppes at Laredo and Pinnacle Industry Center.

Attendees interested in finding employment are encouraged to dress professionally and prepare a resume ahead of time for potential on-site interviews.

## CUELLAR

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man and has always co-operated with the government,” criminal defense attorney Michael McCrum told the San Antonio Express-News. “He wants nothing more than for truth and justice to see the light of day.”

“If I were Henry or Imelda Cuellar, I’d be concerned,” McCrum added.

Strother declined to comment, referring questions to his lawyer.

The 50-year-old consultant has been a fixture in South Texas politics for years. In San Antonio, he’s managed numerous city council campaigns, advised the firefighters’ union in its push for better contract terms and served as a spokesman for area business interests.

A constant in Strother’s career has been his close association with Cuellar. For more than 20 years, he was the Laredo Democrat’s chief strategist and political eyes and ears. Cuellar was first elected to represent the 28th Congressional District in 2004.

A partial review of campaign finance records shows that Cuellar’s political action committee, Texans for Henry Cuellar, paid Strother \$11,798 for consulting services between 2015 and 2021.

In the 54-page federal indictment, Strother is identified only as Individual-4 — Cuellar’s “campaign manager and former chief of staff residing in Buda, Texas.”

### The alleged scheme

Cuellar allegedly tapped a “longtime associate,” identified in the indictment as Individual-3, to help disguise bribes from a Mexico City bank that wanted the congressman’s help in pressuring the U.S. government to revise



Bob Owen/San Antonio Express-News

The relationship between Henry Cuellar and Colin Strother goes back decades when Cuellar was, candidate for US Congressional District 28, and Strother was his campaign manager. An indictment says Colin Strother was a go-between for payoffs to Rep. Henry Cuellar and his wife. His lawyer says Strother just wants the truth to come out.

money-laundering rules and fend off federal regulation of payday lenders.

The associate, a San Antonio businessman, met with Cuellar over breakfast in Laredo on Nov. 15, 2015, to discuss the details of a “sham contract” under which thousands of dollars would flow every month to a shell company headed by Imelda Cuellar, the indictment says.

“Individual-3 told Henry Cuellar that it was not a good idea to pay Imelda Cuellar directly,” the indictment states. “Henry Cuellar suggested that Individual-3 pay Henry Cuellar’s campaign manager, Individual-4, and Individual-4 would, in turn, pay Imelda Cuellar.”

For their trouble, Indi-

viduals-3 and 4 each would receive \$1,000 a month, according to the indictment.

The San Antonio businessman traveled to Mexico City to sign a contract with the unnamed bank on Dec. 17, 2015, the Justice Department contends. The agreed-upon contract would pay \$15,000 per month for two years for the “strategic consulting and advising services” of Imelda Cuellar, effective Jan. 1, 2016.

Cuellar asked Individual-4 (Strother) to get together with the San Antonio businessman, the indictment says. The meeting took place on Feb. 25, 2016, in an unnamed San Antonio restaurant.

“To conceal the true nature of the scheme, In-

dividual-3 told Individual-4 that he was working on a project to test, certify, and sell a fuel lubricant” produced by a Mexican company, the indictment says. Individual-4 would receive payments of \$11,000 per month, passing on \$10,000 of it to Imelda Cuellar and keeping \$1,000.

Cuellar’s wife, a retired tax enforcement officer at the Texas comptroller’s office, “performed little or no legitimate work in exchange for the payments,” the indictment says.

Individual-4 received the \$11,000 monthly payments starting March 24, 2016, and ending Dec. 27, 2017, prosecutors say.

### Azerbaijani connection

The alleged flow of bribes from the Mexican bank was one of two such arrangements described in the indictment. The other involved the national oil and gas company of Azerbaijan, a country in the Caucasus re-

gion.

The oil company paid bribes to the Cuellars through intermediaries, shell companies and “sham contracts” that called for Imelda to be paid for professional services, despite doing “little to no legitimate work,” prosecutors allege.

As part of the scheme, the oil company agreed in 2017 to hire Imelda as a consultant to an Azerbaijan-affiliated firm based in Katy. She would be paid to help the affiliate “find suitable partners in the Houston area that are willing and able to supply oil and gas equipment,” according to the indictment.

The congressman arranged for his wife to meet with Azerbaijani oil officials over lunch at a San Antonio steakhouse on Oct. 6, 2017, to discuss the consulting deal, the indictment states.

Soon afterward, the Cuellars allegedly formed a new “shell company ... to receive the

bribe payments.” The consulting contract paid \$20,000 a month for 12 months and was “a sham used to disguise and legitimate Henry Cuellar’s corrupt agreement to take official acts in violation of his official duties to benefit the government of Azerbaijan and to act as an agent of the government of Azerbaijan,” according to the indictment.

Cuellar has said he and his wife are innocent of the charges, and that he intends to continue his campaign for an 11th consecutive term in Congress.

### Editor’s note

During a break from his journalism career, Greg Jefferson worked in city government and politics from 2015-18. For a month and a half in 2017, he and Colin Strother were among consultants who worked on the unsuccessful reelection campaign of then-San Antonio Mayor Ivy Taylor.

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