

## TAYLOR

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the time. A majority of the investment management business is built on dumb — but allowable — investing styles, which are best left for the market to sort out.

The inclusion of BlackRock on the comptroller's boycott list shows most clearly that this is political punishment to satisfy precious snowflakes in Texas government leadership rather than anything else.

### Social media bias

Meanwhile, Texas continues to seek to bully social media companies for perceived political bias through the recently passed House Bill 20. This law is hopefully on its way to being struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but we're a bit away from that.

Last week, a federal appeals court prevented HB 20 from going into effect, a win for private social media companies.

Texas government leaders say these companies have an inherent liberal bias and that the bill is an attempt to force them to divulge their content moderation practices so that conservative voices do not get squashed.

The social media companies have responded that they must filter content on their platforms to avoid violence, hate speech and fraud.

Matt Schruers — president of trade group CCA, which represents social media companies targeted by HB 20 — praised the appeals court ruling, saying it “means Texas’ unconstitutional law will not be in force as



Ting Shen / Bloomberg

**Larry Fink, BlackRock CEO, is on the comptroller's naughty list because Fink advocates considering environmental and social goals when investing.**

the issue of government-compelled dissemination of speech makes its way to the Supreme Court. We are confident these laws will not stand.”

Let's be clear about what is going with these bad laws — SB 13 and HB 20.

A private company, like a private citizen, may engage in popular or unpopular, wise or unwise political activity or political expression. The limits are generally against outright fraud, inciting violence or targeted hate speech. Expressing or pursuing individual or corporate opposition to fossil fuels is none of those things. It may be controversial. It may even be bad business. But it should not be forbidden.

When the government limits the political activities or speech of private businesses, that should worry the strongest free speech constitutionalists and free marketers among us.

We should worry when government forbids controversial speech, not when the private sector engages in it. That's the

whole point of the First Amendment.

Texas leaders, in their rush to be politically correct, seem to have forgotten a basic civics ideal inspired by Voltaire: “I detest what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

Until now, free market-ers and strong constitutionalists have generally held the position that a government forbidding expressions of beliefs that are not fraudulent, violent or hateful is far worse than the alternative of allowing them.

Texans, we are better than this. Do not let politically correct snowflakes in Austin suppress the free market and free speech this way. I cannot see why these bills are a consistent position of the Texas Republican Party.

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## BIZ FEED

# Maritime Center docks at East River

Houston Maritime Center, a nonprofit organization aimed at educating the community on maritime history and industry, leased a 6,281-square-foot space in the first phase of East River, a mixed-use development of Houston-based Midway on 150 acres near downtown.

Founded in 2000 by naval architect James “Jim” L. Manzolillo, the center will relocate from interim space 2311 Canal in the East End in spring 2023.

The new space is in East River's Trail Head 1 office building, adjacent to green space along Buffalo Bayou.

Brandi McDonald-Sikes of SVN-J. Beard-Greater Houston, who handles office leasing for Midway, said the setting is ideal to learn about maritime history.

The East River site was formerly the headquarters of engineering and construction firm Brown & Root.

“The early industrial history of the East River site was shaped by Houston's reliance on Buffalo Bayou, which provided access to the Gulf of Mexico and was strategically important for many local businesses in the early 20th century,” McDonald-Sikes said in a statement.

East River's Phase I, consisting of 300,000 square feet of office space, 360 apartment

units and 100,000 square feet of retail at the ground floor of the office buildings, garage and bayou pavilions, is scheduled for completion in the 2023.

*Katherine Feser*

### IKEA is trying out self-driving trucks

IKEA, the Swedish furniture retailer, has begun piloting autonomous trucks to transport its products across Texas highways.

The program is a partnership with California-based self-driving trucking company Kodiak Robotics that started in August, but wasn't previously made public.

Every day for nearly three months, a self-driving truck has picked up a delivery from IKEA's Baytown distribution center and made the nearly 300-mile trip to Frisco by late afternoon.

A professional driver still sits behind the wheel and manages driving on local roads, but the truck uses camera, radar and light sensors to steer, brake and navigate Texas highway traffic.

The goal is both to reduce the strain of long trips on truck drivers while also improving road safety, Kodiak said.

Each truck contains a monitoring system that can tell when a sensor is damaged, when tire pressure is too low or when the truck encounters

another condition that makes autonomous driving unsafe.

Kodiak Robotics was founded in 2018 and has an operations center in Texas.

Its trucks have been making daily deliveries between Houston and Dallas since 2019, according to the company.

IKEA operates five stores in Texas — including one in Houston — and several fulfillment centers throughout the state.

*Megan Muncie*

### MedCore building a rehab hospital

MedCore Partners, a real estate development company based in Dallas-Fort Worth, in partnership with health care provider ClearSky Health, said it has started construction on a 36-bed inpatient rehabilitation hospital in Baytown.

ClearSky Rehabilitation Hospital of Baytown, a planned 44,000-square-foot hospital at 150 Blue Heron Parkway, is expected to open in late 2023.

The hospital is projected to create 100 jobs and treat more than 650 patients annually.

The Baytown hospital is the latest in a series of proposed ClearSky Health hospitals to be developed by MedCore.

Trinity Investors and Home Bank provided financing.

*Katherine Feser*