



STEMBoost Newsletter

Issue XIII

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STEMBoost Summer Workshops & Senior Sendoff

Angela Zhang

This past month, STEMBoost summer workshops have come to a close in mid-August as instructors and students begin the new school year. We thank all instructors for their hard work preparing the workshops, and students for attending them, and wish everyone well as the transition back to in-person school continues.

Though the summer workshops have come to a close, STEMBoost is as active as ever, especially with constructing positions and applications for this year's new officer team. We encourage all interested parties to keep their eyes peeled for the applications, which will be coming soon. Officers will have opportunities to improve and move STEMBoost forward throughout the next year, especially with events like the STEMBoost Invitational upcoming.

In lieu of the new school year, the STEMBoost officer team held a senior sendoff for all officers from the previous year now going off to college. Current officers met with alumni on Sunday, August 22 for a fun and relaxing lunch at Panera Bread. We thank the alumni for all their hard work in the club, and we wish them the best of luck at college and beyond. This year's alumni are listed as follows:

Conner Yin (2020 Division Head of Computer Science, attending Santa Clara University)

David Smith (Cofounder and 2020 President, attending Stanford University)

Flora Huang (2020 VP of Communications & PR, attending Stanford University)

Grace Kuo (2020 VP of Marketing & Design, attending USC)

Nishanth Arumugam (Instructor, attending UCSD)

Saarang Kashyap (2020 Head of Curriculum, attending UCLA).

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Fun Fact

What is the smallest bone in human body? (See answer in the back)

The Consequences of Politicizing Science in America

Ryan Li

A system of government in which politicians are motivated by their own political ideologies, ignoring suggestions from scientists and scientific studies alike while seeking to discredit them. Although seemingly a nightmarish scenario, modern day American politics is filled with self-centered, hypocritical politicians like these. The most recent example of this being Texas Governor Greg Abbott and COVID-19 vaccine requirements in government entities within the state.

On August 25, Governor Abbott issued an executive order, GA-39, banning government entities within Texas from requiring the COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of the approval status of the vaccine. In addition, any entity which receives public funds, state agencies, and political subdivisions cannot mandate that people show proof of vaccination to receive services. However, nursing homes, state-supported living centers, assisted living facilities, and long-term care facilities are not covered by this executive order (1).

This is very interesting, because Governor Abbott had also acknowledged the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic within GA-39, stating that “I...issued a disaster proclamation on March 13, 2020, certifying...that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) poses an imminent threat of disaster for all Texas counties...” (2). He had even actively supported vaccines for COVID-19 in the past, stating that “he especially wanted to promote the vaccine in light of polls that show Texans are ‘apprehensive’ about it” (3). Even within his most recent executive order he stated how COVID-19 vaccines “are strongly encouraged for those eligible to receive one”. However, he brings up a political point in the next clause by saying that the act of vaccination should be voluntary, seemingly backtracking on his previous stance (2). In addition, just moments before he was vaccinated live on TV in December 2020, Abbott had stated that “I will never ask any Texan to do something that I’m not willing to do myself” (3). However, GA-39 actively bars government entities within Texas from mandating vaccines, even in the face of the contagious Delta variant.

An explanation for Abbott’s inconsistent behavior could be him being pressured into banning COVID-19 vaccine mandates by his opponents in his own party. It can further be inferred that the Governor is being motivated by maintaining a positive public image, rather than by science. His new executive order also comes just days after the Food and Drug Administration fully approved of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, indicating that this order was at least partially in response to the FDA’s approval of the vaccine (1). This is a perfect example of the concept of politicizing science, where politicians are utilizing political ideas and political party beliefs to justify their own actions, while attempting to discredit scientific evidence. Not only does this lead to inaccurate information being conveyed to the public, but it also fosters a sense of distrust in the scientific method as well as the scientific community in general. This can be very dangerous, as politicians are increasingly pushing their own political agenda and making their actions be motivated by political ideologies, rather than scientific studies and principles that may go against their political party’s beliefs.

In addition, even though for now nursing homes, living centers and facilities, as well as long-term care facilities--all places which house those most vulnerable to COVID-19--are free from this executive order, it is not improbable that a future Governor executive order would ban employees at these facilities from being required to take the COVID-19 vaccine. This would actively jeopardize countless senior residents unnecessarily, the very people who the vaccine has been proven to protect.

1. Weixel, Nathaniel. “Texas governor bans COVID-19 vaccine mandates regardless of approval status.” The Hill, 25 Aug 2021. Web. <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/569440-texas-governor-bans-covid-vaccine-mandates-regardless-of-approval-status?rl=1>
2. “Governor Abbott Issues Executive Order Maintaining Prohibition Of Vaccine Mandates In Texas.” Office of the Texas Governor, 25 Aug 2021. Web. <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-executive-order-maintaining-prohibition-of-vaccine-mandates-in-texas>
3. Svitek, Patrick. “Gov. Greg Abbott receives COVID-19 vaccine, saying he wants to serve as an example to Texans.” The Texas Tribune, 22 Dec 2020. Web. <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/12/22/greg-abbott-texas-vaccine>

Answer: The smallest bone in the human body is present in the middle part of the ear. It's called the stirrup and is only 2.8 mm (millimetres) long.