

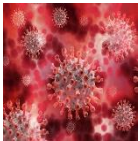


GARY
VanDeaver
 State Representative

86th Legislature Report - House District 1
Bowie, Franklin, Lamar & Red River counties

October 2020

Around the District. COVID recovery. I want to thank everyone who has reached out and sent best wishes for my health and recovery from the coronavirus. I am happy to report that I am on the mend and getting back to normal. Please do what you can do to avoid getting the coronavirus because I can tell you from personal experience that this illness is something no one wants to get. So, please follow the latest health guidelines by frequently washing your hands, wearing masks and practice social distancing.



2020 Listening Virtual Tours. Last week, I hosted two virtual listening sessions with residents of House District 1. The first one was with members the community at large, and the second event was with our District's high school students. During both meetings, I presented information about conditions in our District and the state, as well as issues the legislature will face in 2021, including the budget and redistricting. During these events, I also conducted polling of participants on local and state issues.

Community Session. During the open forum, we discussed what the next legislative session may look like in regards to large events, office policies, bill filing and committee hearings, as well as talked about issues surrounding property taxes, property appraisals and redistricting. It was truly a pleasure

and honor to be able to listen to you and gather data about what you think is important. If you missed the session and want to know what we talked about, the complete recording is available on my Facebook page.

Community Polling Results. Here are the results of the poll during the community discussion:

- 100% said they are registered voters and planned to vote in 2020.
- 91% said they are voting early and 9% indicated they are voting by mail.
- 68% said their property taxes rose while 32% said their property taxes stayed roughly the same.
- 91% expressed they are either concerned or very concerned about the Texas economy.
- 59% indicated they felt that the current state of health care in our district is either inadequate or more than inadequate.
- 24% have experienced a medical emergency in the district and been unable to receive health care treatments in a timely fashion.
- 41% have not been able to visit their relatives/friends in long-term care facilities.
- 67% are concerned about water issues in Northeast Texas.
- 83% indicated they have adequate technology in their household for remote

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work, virtual learning, commerce and/or telemedicine, but 83% also expressed concerns over broadband access or internet strength areas in their area.

- 56% felt that the K-12 students in the area are NOT receiving a high-quality education right now.
- 44% felt that the state's response to COVID-19 has been inadequate while another 44% believed that it has been adequate. Only 11% felt that the state has had an exaggerated response.

*Please note that in the community and student polling, percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Student Session. During the student session, I was excited to learn through polling about how students are doing in the midst of all these changes and challenges in their lives right now. It was encouraging to hear that they were thinking deeply about their futures after high school, and that they consider their schools safe. Here are the results from the student polling:

- 12% of students were seniors, 44% were juniors, 33% were sophomores and 12% were freshmen.
- 25% reported participating in student government or leadership organizations, 25% in sports, 12% in other, 11% in arts/theatre, 10% in jobs, 7% in UIL academics, 6% in music (band, orchestra, and choir) and 3% in FFA.
- 98% said they feel more productive and successful in an on-campus, in-person setting rather a virtual instruction setting.
- 79% reported that their school district/campus was handling instruction via a hybrid method of in-person and virtual learning.

- 64% said they feel sick when taking the STAAR tests, while 18% felt neutral and 11% angry.
- 60% reported feeling happy about their STAAR scores, with 23% who felt neutral and 12% sad.
- On average students reported having good internet access, adequate technology and the ability to attend all their online courses (on a scale of 1-5, the averages were 4.2, 4.5 and 4.5).
- Most students believed that the most important aspect of their success was having college credit, professional certification and/or internship opportunities. The second most important aspect was school culture, access to teachers and/or extracurricular activities. The third included counseling and/or academic advising services, and the fourth was adequate internet service and technology. They considered STAAR tests to be the least important contributor to their success as a student.
- 30% indicated their post-secondary plans have changed as a result of COVID-19. Several clarified that these changes included the inability to do college tours/interviews and the rescheduling of ACT/SAT tests.
- On average (4.3 out of 5) students agreed that they felt safe at school and that their school has good safety protocols when it comes to potential school violence.
- Students reported feeling less safe when it comes to COVID prevention at their school (when compared to school violence, 3.2 out of 5), and a lower opinion of their school's safety protocols (3.6 out of 5) but then later 47% commented that they did feel safe and wanted less worry about COVID. 21%

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wanted to increase cleaning protocols and have more enforcement of mask rules.

- 32% indicated that they were concerned about the recent social unrest in our communities.
- When asked what issues they thought are the most important for the state to address, 37% said violence, riots and looting while 23% said removing the mask order. Others (6% each) wanted to address the protests, Black Lives Matter movement, STAAR tests and enforcement of masks.
- 84% of students did not know that their principal could help them register to vote when they turn 18, but 97% of participants were under 18 and ineligible to vote in 2020.

Texarkana Symphony Orchestra (TSO) plays on.

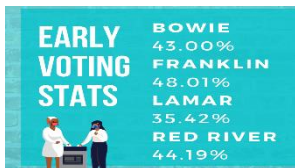
The TSO recently informed my office of its upcoming 2020-21 season that kicks off on



Saturday, November 7, with its *Happy Birthday, Ludwig!* concert. It is refreshing to know that local institutions are active and providing vital opportunities in these uncertain times. For

more information, contact their office at 870-773-3401 or at: www.texarkanasymphony.org.

Early voting. Early voting for this year's general election ends Friday, October 30; and November 3, is the General Election. See the graphic for a look



at the early voting stats for HD 1 as of 10/28/2020. Here is a link for more information from the Texas Secretary

of State's office:

<https://www.votetexas.gov/voting/how.html>.

Around the Capitol. Testing for COVID-19: The Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) has many COVID19 testing sites around the

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state; check for a location near you by visiting this interactive map: covidtest.tdem.texas.gov.

TWC fraud alert. My offices have responded to dozens and dozens of constituents reaching out for help with issues in dealing with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). These issues have ranged from not being able to talk with a TWC staff person, to filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits to getting help when someone has used a person's personal information to file a fraudulent UI claim. The TWC recently sent my office important information to help prevent fraudulent claims stating that a TWC specialist will NEVER ask for your: credit card; full bank account number; or fee payment. To report fraud, TWC encourages people to take these steps: 1. visit [twc.texas.gov](https://www.twc.texas.gov); 2. click "Report Fraud" in the center of the page; and 3. complete the fraud form.

TWC reinstates work-search requirement. Earlier this month, the TWC announced that it is



reinstating the work-search requirement in November. First-time searches by people receiving UI benefits have to be reported no later than November 29, 2020; and you

must do at least three searches a week that can be done online. The Work-Search Requirement is a federal mandate for continuing to receive unemployment benefits. All individuals receiving unemployment benefits will need to complete the designated number of work searches each week, beginning on the date listed in their work-search notification document that can be found in your inbox at:

<https://www.twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/unemployment-benefits-services> or was received in the mail.

What counts as a work-search activity? TWC has determined that acceptable work search activities include, but are not limited to:

- Register at WorkInTexas.com. For support, contact your local [Workforce Solutions Office](#).
- Use WorkInTexas.com to search for jobs.
- Obtain and follow up on job contacts from WorkInTexas.com or [Workforce Solutions office](#) staff.
- Register at a [public workforce office](#) in the state you live in if you do not live or work in Texas.
- Register for work with a private employment agency, placement service of a school/college/university or register with electronic job-matching systems; please note this does not replace WorkInTexas.com registration.
- Make in-person visits, complete a job application or interview with employers who may reasonably be expected to have openings for suitable work. The job application can be submitted in person, online, by fax, or in any other manner directed by the employer and appropriate for the type of work being sought.
- Mail a job application and/or a résumé as instructed by a public job notice.
- Create a re-employment plan.
- Create or upload résumé to job boards.
- Participate in work-related networking events such as job clubs or job fairs, or employment-related workshops that offer instruction in improving the job seeker's skills for obtaining employment.
- Take advantage of re-employment services and resources available at your nearest [Workforce Solutions office](#) virtually.

Employment resources. The TWC not only handles unemployment-related issues, it also serves the state in trying to link employers with needed employees. TWC has over 180 workforce solutions offices around the state ready to assist claimants with everything from résumé writing to job searching. TWC has partnered with Metrix Learning to offer over 5,000 online courses free to all Texans.

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These courses count as work search activities; individuals can visit: <https://www.workintexas.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>. Texas businesses are hiring right now, and according to the TWC, there are approximately 695,000 jobs available in on WorkInTexas.com, which is the state's online jobs portal.

Child Care Work Search Requirement. The TWC has also reinstated the work search requirements for parents receiving child care benefits effective November 1, 2020. TWC removed the work requirements for child care services as part of the agency's response to COVID-19 to provide short-term relief and greater stability for child care providers. With more Texas business getting back to work, the lack of a work requirement makes it more difficult for working families to access child care services. This change following the state's continued re-opening of businesses, brings TWC's subsidized child care program in line with its mission: "to provide improved access to quality child care to enable families to return to work."

Have a new electronic device? Did you know that the Texas Commission on Environment Quality (TCEQ) has two electronic recycling programs? The



Texas Recycles Computers & Texas Recycles TVs programs were created to offer Texans convenient and free recycling options. For more information:

<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/recycle/electronics>

Saturday appointments still available at DL offices.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)



announced earlier this month that many of its Driver's License (DL) offices will have Saturday appointments through December 19, except the Saturday

(11/28/2020) after Thanksgiving; for more information: <https://www.dps.texas.gov/>.

Appointments are required as are compliance with COVID-19 protocols of social distancing and wearing a mask. These locations in House District 1 will have Saturday appointments available: Clarksville, New Boston, Paris and Texarkana. Schedule your appointment at:

<http://bit.ly/SaturdayDLAppointments>.

DSHS advice for Halloween and Dia de los Muertos.

With COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations rising, you don't have to abandon Halloween and Día de



los Muertos activities, but you can make them safer this year. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is sharing tips on what to do to minimize the risk of spreading the coronavirus during

this season. The safest activities are those that put you in direct contact only with people you live with. You can carve pumpkins or decorate your home, prepare a meal that was a favorite of your deceased loved ones, make an ofrenda (offering) or participate in an online costume contest or fashion show. Outdoor activities can provide more space for physical distancing and reduce the risk of spreading the virus from one person to another. Join in a neighborhood costume parade or scavenger hunt where people stay six feet apart. Decorate the graves of loved ones or have a small group of family and friends for an outdoor meal at a safe distance. Instead of door-to-door trick or treating, leave individually bagged treats at the end of the driveway or on the front steps so children can pick them up without direct contact with other people. Large, indoor gatherings and anything that brings you face-to-face with people you don't live with should be avoided. Masks are more important than ever, but a costume mask is not a substitute for a protective cloth mask. It won't provide the same kind of protection unless it has at least two layers of breathable fabric that completely cover the nose and mouth. Build a protective mask into your costume, and don't wear separate protective and costume masks at the same time because that can make it more difficult to breathe.

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Don't forget to get a flu shot.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document about the upcoming flu season and the COVID-19 pandemic:

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm#anchor_1597410034241. The CDC stresses the importance of getting a flu shot this year, as well as continuing to practice social distancing, hand washing and wearing a mask to prevent both the spread of the flu and the coronavirus. Though the flu and the coronavirus exhibit similar symptoms, the only way to be sure to know if you have COVID-19 is by being tested for the virus. Here is a link to information from the CDC on the differences between the two illnesses: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>. Please take all necessary preventative precautions since both of these illnesses can be deadly.

Veterans Day. Please take a moment on November 11, to thank our veterans for all they have done for and sacrificed in keeping our country safe and secure. We owe them an enormous debt of



gratitude and respect for their selfless service to our state and country. Thank you and God bless our veterans!

Social Media. Please follow me on both my Facebook and Twitter accounts!

My office is here to help. I thank each of you for letting me serve you as your state representative. Please contact either the District office (903-628-0361) or Capitol office (512-463-0692) if there is anything you think we can do to help you.