



Representative John Turner

District 114 | Email Update | May 8, 2020

Date: May 8, 2020
Subject: District 114 COVID-19 Update

Dear friends and neighbors,

We're now over six weeks into the pandemic here in Dallas. And if you're like me, it feels like much longer. Sadly, over 120 of our fellow Dallas County residents have lost their lives to COVID-19, adding to the tragic national toll. Thousands more in our region have now experienced other direct health effects. Many more continue to contend with financial hardship, cancelled events, and the challenges of closed school campuses. Our routines have been upended and we feel loss, frustration, and fatigue.

But even as this ordeal continues, it's important to keep our guard up. The virus is an enemy that doesn't operate on our timetable. Although Governor Abbott has recently issued orders to reopen parts of the Texas economy (which you can read about [here](#)), public health experts tell us that we are far from out of the woods.

Maintaining Our Vigilance

As I write this, each of the four highest totals for [daily new reported cases](#) in Dallas County have been during this week, and last week (April 23 through May 2) was the worst week yet in the State of Texas for both reported infections and deaths. While the infection numbers are affected by the rate of testing, it's unclear whether the state has yet reached its peak in daily new cases. **What is clear is that the choices we collectively make today will affect how well we are able to manage the virus in the months ahead.**

Moving forward, we should seek to go on the offensive against COVID-19 – by increasing our testing, building up our capacity for contact tracing, promoting good research and treatment options, and preparing diligently for the possibility of new surges this summer and fall. I will focus on these objectives as I help to monitor our state's continuing response.

In the meantime, we should all continue to follow important [CDC guidelines](#), like:

- Maintaining social distancing (six feet or more)
- Avoiding unnecessary gatherings
- Wearing a face covering when making necessary visits to stores and businesses. Remember, you are doing this not only for your own protection, but out of consideration for those around you – including those who serve you in these establishments.

Adhering to these guidelines today will make a difference in our ability to support our economy – **and even more importantly, to protect human life and health** – in the months to come.

Long-Term Care Settings

One area of major concern is the surge in COVID-19 cases in long-term care settings. Residents at nursing homes, state supported living centers, and other long-term care facilities are among the most vulnerable to the virus. I joined a bipartisan group of legislative colleagues in [a letter](#) last week to the Governor, requesting

mandatory testing of all employees and residents, and financial support to augment staff, equipment, and protections at these facilities.

Unemployment Assistance

Unemployment remains a major concern and it will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Many constituents have reported an inability to get through to the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) through the website or phone lines. If you or someone you know has lost a job due to the pandemic, our office remains available to help however we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (214) 234-7625 (Dallas office), (512) 463-0576 (Austin office) or email at District114.Turner@house.texas.gov.

Sanitizer for First Responders

Our office has been working to assist in the distribution of hand sanitizer to Dallas County police, fire, and healthcare professionals. Over the past six weeks, my District Director, Brenda Allen, helped facilitate the distribution of over 100,000 donated units of hand sanitizer – the equivalent of two tanker trucks. On April 23, County Judge Clay Jenkins recognized Brenda with the “Community Hero” Award for her role in putting these resources in the hands of frontline responders. A Dallas Morning News story about the sanitizer donations can be found [here](#). We are grateful to Nue Vodka, Bendt Distilling, Mary Kay, Tito’s Vodka, the Dallas Mavericks, and Green Planet, who generously donated and assisted in this effort.

High School Graduations

One of the hardest aspects of the pandemic is that our 12th graders miss being on campus for the last months of high school – including their academic and athletic events, banquets, prom, and traditional graduation ceremonies. But our schools are finding special and creative ways to recognize the class of 2020, honoring the many accomplishments of these fine graduates. We all join in our congratulations to them. Dallas ISD will hold 32 virtual graduation ceremonies between May 22 and May 31. To view the schedule visit <https://dallasisd.org/graduations>. DISD officials are encouraging the community to step outside their residence on Thursday, May 21 from 7-7:10 p.m. to cheer for all seniors districtwide. Richardson ISD is still finalizing its plans for graduation, and more information will be posted in the coming days. Visit <http://www.risd.org/> for updates.

Tornado Recovery

In my last email update, I mentioned my request to the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) to conduct a “data call” to collect information from insurers about how tornado-related claims are being handled in Dallas. We learned last week that TDI has [agreed](#) to conduct that data call, which I hope will help us evaluate the insurance industry’s response to the disaster. Separately, you may have seen news that the federal government denied Dallas’s request for FEMA assistance to help our local governments cover the costs of the tornado. This is disappointing, as those funds could be used to help pay for the schools damaged by the tornado and for other public infrastructure, taking some of that burden off of local taxpayers. Texas has appealed that decision, and I am supporting that appeal.

Thanks to Frontline Responders

It was inspiring to me to participate in an in-car, driving salute to Parkland Hospital workers on Friday, April 24, organized by the Dallas Chapter of the Texas Exes. It was a four-lap drive around Parkland, with headlights on and signs in car windows, to thank the nurses, doctors, and other hospital workers who viewed the parade from the inside the hospital. Thank you to the Texas Exes for organizing this special event.

As I drove, my thought was simple: these people are heroes. Even as we persevere amid the stresses and strains of the pandemic, the courage and compassion shown by our frontline workers will continue to inspire and give us hope. **For them, and for our fellow citizens and neighbors, let's stay the course and each do our part.**

Sincerely,

John Turner
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