



# Representative John Turner

District 114 | Email Update | November 20, 2020

**Date:** November 20, 2020  
**Subject:** District 114 COVID-19 Update

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Dear friends and neighbors,

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you for a second term in the Texas House of Representatives. In light of the many challenges our city, state, and country face, I'm humbled by the faith you have put in me to continue to be your voice in Austin.

The 87th legislative session starts in January. I've begun working on preparations for the session. But in this email update, I'd like to focus on where we stand on the COVID-19 pandemic as we move into the holiday season.

## **Local and State Trends**

The past two weeks have brought several grim milestones in our fight against COVID-19. On Thursday, Dallas County set a single-day record for new reported cases with 1,860. Texas also broke its single-day record statewide with 12,293 new cases reported the same day. Texas became the first state to have over 1,000,000 cumulative cases, and we have passed 20,000 total COVID-19 deaths in our state since the beginning of the pandemic. Nationally over 250,000 have lost their lives to the disease.

Here in Dallas County, for the last seven days, we are averaging over 1,200 new COVID-19 cases per day. Our positivity rate at the county level was recently reported as 13.2%. Current COVID-19 hospitalizations in the North Texas Trauma Service Area surpassed 2,000 last week for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, and have remained above that level since. Daily new cases have surpassed the peak numbers we saw in July. Unfortunately, these trends are likely to increase in the coming weeks.

As we move into the holidays and winter months, the imperative for all of us to do our part has never been greater. For up-to-date information on virus numbers, you can view the Texas Department of State Health Service's COVID-19 dashboard [here](#). Dallas County provides local information [here](#) and [here](#). The Texas Tribune provides graphical information using DSHS data [here](#), and the Dallas Morning News maintains updated local and state information [here](#).

To track COVID-19 among our school districts, click [here](#) for the DISD COVID-19 dashboard, and click [here](#) for RISD's COVID-19 notification portal.

## **The Path Forward**

On November 13, County Judge Clay Jenkins sent a letter to Governor Greg Abbott relaying the recommendations of the Dallas County Public Health Committee. These include a stronger public mask order, temporarily closing indoor dining at restaurants, temporarily limiting indoor and outdoor gatherings to 10 or fewer people, and stricter capacity limits at certain businesses. In his letter, Judge Jenkins noted that some of these recommendations are prohibited under statewide executive orders, and asked that the Governor either implement the recommendations or authorize local governments to do so.

I support the requests listed above, which are recommended by the Public Health Committee, and I hope the Governor acts on them promptly. To be clear, the pandemic has been long and no one enjoys having to limit gatherings and activities. But I believe these measures are justified at this critical moment on the grounds of (1) saving lives; (2) avoiding the prospect of overwhelming our hospitals and health care workers; and (3) reducing the overall prevalence of the virus, which is essential for economic recovery and any sustainable return to normal life.

It is also important to bring these numbers down in order to protect the [functioning of our schools](#). We must be prepared to limit some higher-risk gatherings for the sake of allowing learning to continue safely for millions of Texas students, teachers, and school staff.

### **Hope on the Horizon**

The recent news about promising COVID-19 vaccine trials from Pfizer and Moderna are a sign that there is a light at the end of this long tunnel. Here is what we know so far.

The two vaccines both require two doses - an initial shot and a booster. The two companies have estimated that they will have 45 million doses (about enough to vaccinate 22.5 million Americans) by January. Multiple levels of government are already planning for a massive manufacturing and distribution effort to get as many doses to the public as quickly as possible.

The Texas Department of State Health Services will coordinate vaccine distribution efforts across our state, and DSHS has released the first draft of its COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, which you can see [here](#). Under the Plan, an initial phase of distribution will target vulnerable populations and frontline workers to achieve vaccination coverage in those groups. As the supply of vaccines increases, more will gradually become available to the general public over the months of 2021. This distribution effort will require a high level of federal, state, local and private-sector coordination in order to be successful.

An effective vaccine with high adoption rates will save lives. The prospect of vaccines being widely distributed within less than a year makes it all the more urgent for us to act now, to protect those who will hopefully be helped when they become available.

### **Thanksgiving Precautions and Closing Thoughts**

As the holidays approach, we must accept that sacrifices and alterations in our normal plans are necessary to protect ourselves and those close to us, and to avoid making the pandemic situation even worse. Please think carefully about your holiday plans and adhere to public health guidelines related to gathering, distancing, and mask-wearing.

Despite our difficulties, we have much to be thankful for. Even in the midst of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln saw fit to set apart the last Thursday of November as “[a day of Thanksgiving and Praise](#).” In that spirit, I’m particularly thankful for our health care professionals, first responders, teachers, essential workers, and everyone else who has worked tirelessly during these long months. I am grateful for the blessings we enjoy as a nation and for the hope we have for improved circumstances in the year ahead.

From my family to yours, we wish you a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

John Turner  
State Representative  
House District 114

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