



Representative John Turner

District 114 | Email Update | January 17, 2021

Date: January 17, 2021
Subject: District 114 COVID-19 & 87th Session Update

Dear friends and neighbors,

This last week marked the start of the 87th Texas Legislative Session. I am honored to be back in Austin representing District 114 in the House of Representatives.

It is quite a time to begin a new legislature, with COVID-19 still running rampant and the country still reckoning with the attack on the Capitol in Washington. But we hope that 2021 will bring progress both in taming the virus and in restoring our civic wellbeing. I intend to keep those two priorities foremost in my mind throughout the session.

The Session Ahead

On Tuesday, we took the oath of office and elected a new Speaker of the House, [Representative Dade Phelan](#) of Beaumont. In the coming weeks, Speaker Phelan will be assigning members to committees, and then the real legislating will begin.

Also last week, Comptroller Glenn Hegar released his [Biennial Revenue Estimate](#), forecasting a \$1 billion deficit for the current biennium of 2020-21. He also estimated a lower amount of revenue for the upcoming budget cycle than we had for the previous cycle, meaning that the budget will be a significant challenge this session. I hope to work for a responsible budget that sustains our funding commitments to public education and public health, among other priorities.

In addition to the state budget, other critical issues will include health insurance coverage, public safety, and redistricting. I am working on my own proposed bills, most of which should be filed in the coming several weeks. I am always open to your input about new legislation that should be considered. Please feel free to email District114.Turner@house.texas.gov, call our office at 214-234-7625, or write to us at P.O. Box 2910 Austin, TX 78768.

COVID-19 and Vaccine Distribution in Dallas

Of course, dominating this session is COVID-19 and the urgent need to vaccinate our population as rapidly as possible. Our nation is now approaching [400,000 deaths](#) from the disease, a grim and shocking number that hardly anyone would have thought possible when this virus emerged just over a year ago.

Please bear in mind that the spread of COVID-19 **is as about as high now as it has been at any point in the pandemic**. Last week, Dallas County and the State of Texas both set records for the number of COVID-19 diagnoses and the number of patients hospitalized with the disease. And just this weekend, Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) [reported](#) the first case of the new, more contagious variant of the virus in Dallas County.

It is more critical than ever that we focus on following the public health guidelines. **In other words, this is not the time to let up on mask wearing, social distancing, and avoidance of unnecessary gatherings.**

The first weeks of vaccine distribution have been frustrating for many. I believe people should be receiving the vaccine as quickly as possible, under public and transparent criteria applied equally and fairly. Recently I joined a letter to the Governor and Commissioner of State Health Services asking for teachers, grocery workers, and other categories of essential workers who can least avoid interaction with people to be included in the next group of eligible recipients.

As for the current status of vaccine availability: Texas has begun directing most vaccines received to large, state-designated vaccination hubs. On Monday, Jan. 11, DCHHS, in partnership with the City of Dallas, opened the first hub in Dallas at Fair Park. DCHHS has also partnered with Parkland Hospital and UT Southwestern to provide vaccines to eligible people (categories 1A and 1B) who have registered with the County. DCHHS will be providing Parkland and UT Southwestern with names of eligible people who registered with the County. You can register for your vaccination on the [DCHHS website](#). If you have already done so, no additional action is needed. When your turn comes, you will be contacted by the County, Parkland, or UT Southwestern regarding your appointment.

Phase 1A and 1B individuals are eligible to receive a vaccine at these hubs, regardless of where they reside:

- Phase 1A: Front-line health care workers and residents at long-term care facilities
- Phase 1B: People over 65 or with a chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19

More detail about these categories is available at the Texas Department of State Health Services ([DSHS website](#)). As a reminder, the vaccines being given at this time come in two doses – the second to be given [approximately 21-30 days](#) after the first, depending on which vaccine was received.

My office has been advised that last week, people age 75 or older were prioritized at the Fair Park hub and that registration requirements were temporarily relaxed for seniors in this age group, allowing for walk-ups. Walk-ups were also temporarily allowed this weekend at Parkland. But as of this writing, we are told that **both the Fair Park site and the Parkland site are back to appointment-only**. Please be aware that the County waitlist has over 250,000 names on it, so it might take a while to have an appointment scheduled.

In addition to the information on the DCHHS website, there is a DCHHS Vaccine Registration Hotline at 469-749-9900. The hotline hours are Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. Registration assistance is available in English and Spanish.

You can also reach out to your primary health care provider to see if they have vaccine access. They may be able to send you to pharmacies or other facilities that have vaccines available for those with doctor referrals – again, currently for people in categories 1A or 1B.

Finally, here are some other vaccine distributors maintaining waitlists. While we are advised that none of these are currently distributing vaccines to people other than health care workers, you can sign up to be notified of any changes.

Albertson's Pharmacy
Baylor University Medical Center
Renue Pharmacy (Hampton Apothecary)

<http://bit.ly/3pS6uBj>
<http://bit.ly/35aLDI2>

Tom Thumb Pharmacy

<http://bit.ly/35dpeU4>

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and they are key to our ability to begin moving beyond this pandemic. **I encourage everyone to receive a vaccine as soon as you are able and eligible under state and local guidelines.** I certainly plan to get my first dose when DSHS says my age/health group is eligible.

Our Modified Office Policies

I wish we could meet in person in our offices as we did last session. However, **we will be conducting all meetings virtually** for the time being due to COVID-19.

To schedule a call or virtual meeting with me, please call or email our District Director at Brenda.Allen@house.texas.gov or 214-234-7625. To schedule a call or virtual meeting with our Capitol staff in Austin, please call or email my Chief of Staff at Luis.Soberon@house.texas.gov or 512-463-0576.

I look forward to serving you during the 87th Legislature.

Sincerely,

John Turner
State Representative
House District 114

Our Office's Contact Information

Dallas Office: 10300 N. Central Expressway, Ste. 198 Dallas, TX 75231 | (214) 234-7625

Austin Office: P.O. Box 2910 Austin, TX 78768 | (512) 463-0576

Email: District114.Turner@house.texas.gov

###

The Texas House of Representatives is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. This newsletter is available in alternate forms upon request. Please call 1-800-241-1163.

If you are receiving this email, it is because you emailed, called, visited, or otherwise reached out to my office and left us your email address. If you would like to be removed from this email list, please email District114.Turner@house.texas.gov indicating your request to no longer receive emails from this address.