

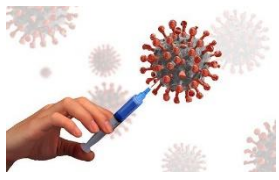


GARY
VanDeaver
State Representative

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

December 2020

Around the District. COVID vaccine arrives in Bowie County. Less than two weeks after being approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine began arriving in Northeast Texas on December 17. Last week, the FDA held hearings on the Moderna vaccine and also issued its emergency use authorization. Shipments of this and the Pfizer vaccine are being distributed across the country.



Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, held a news conference on December 17, to discuss the early stages of vaccine

distributions and administrations of shots to front-line health care workers who have been battling this disease since March without much relief. Two local hospitals, Christus Saint Michael's Health System and Wadley Regional Medical Center received their first delivery of the vaccine on Thursday, December 17. Texas is set to receive 1.4 million doses before the end of the year, but since the vaccine requires two doses administered three weeks apart, these doses will barely begin to inoculate all Texans who want to take it.

Governor Abbott said that while the rollout of the vaccine is now beginning, it will be several weeks, if not months, before there is enough vaccine distributed in Texas for everyone who wants to take it. He again stressed in his remarks that taking the vaccine is voluntary. Governor Abbott said: "It is a historic week in the Lone Star State as the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine arrive in our communities. We are swiftly distributing these vaccines to health care workers across the state and will continue to ensure that Texans on the front lines have access to these live-saving immunizations."



On December 21, DSHS announced additional distributions of

vaccines across Texas including the following locations in HD 1:

- Bowie County:** Brookshire's Pharmacy #72 (100 doses) in New Boston; Super 1 Pharmacy (100 doses) in Texarkana;
- Franklin County:** Brookshire's Pharmacy #58 (100 doses) in Mount Vernon;
- Lamar County (all in Paris):** Brookshire's Pharmacy #14 (100 doses); Kroger Pharmacy (500 doses); and Paris Regional Medical Center (600 doses).

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While I am very pleased these hospitals and pharmacies have begun to receive and distribute the vaccine, I acknowledge these initial distributions are not available in all of my counties. As further plans are developed to make the vaccines available in other parts of my House District, I will keep you informed. As someone who had COVID-19, I hope people take this disease seriously and thoroughly consider taking the vaccine if it is right for you and your family.

Local hospitals' maternal specialty care designations. Both of these local hospitals, Christus Saint Michael's and Wadley, recently earned designations as Level II - Specialty Care Maternal Facilities by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).



This designation, which is valid for three years, shows a facility's dedication to improving, expediting and standardizing the care of maternal patients. Thank you to the leadership,

doctors, nurses and staff at these hospitals who have committed themselves to going the extra mile to ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes for mothers and infants.

Essential medical services postponed in Franklin County. On Monday, December 21, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) announced that hospitals in its Trauma Service Area G must postpone all surgeries and procedures not medically necessary as outlined in the governor's Executive Order GA-31. The postponement of these procedures is due to the percent of hospitalizations for COVID-19 in

Area G exceeding 15 percent of all hospitalizations, which exceeds the threshold established in the governor's Executive Order. The HHSC Trauma Service Area G, based in Longview, includes the following counties: Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Franklin, Freestone, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Houston, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Shelby, Smith, Trinity, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood.

Gun control legislation. My office has received a significant number of calls and emails from people who are upset about gun control legislation already filed for consideration in the 87th legislature that begins next month. Though there have been a number of such bills filed, House Bill 196 seems to have generated the most concern. House Bill 196 "relates to the use of deadly force in defense of a person or property." Despite postings on social media, the bill does not repeal the Castle Doctrine, however, the bill would make changes in the Penal Code to add that a person is justified in using deadly force against another if the actor is unable to safely retreat. It also removes robbery and aggravated robbery as reasons for using deadly force. Please note that I have long been an ardent supporter of our Second Amendment rights and will not change my position because of this bill or any other gun control bill. Having said that, there has been a lot false information about HB 196 widely shared on social media, and it has been upsetting to my constituents.

In case you have not heard the "rest of the story" on HB 196's social media coverage, a humorist, John Semmens, on the website "Freedom's Phoenix," posted a satirical blog post that included false information about repealing the Castle Doctrine and stopping

people from using deadly force to defend themselves or their property. Mr. Semmens even made up false quotations that he credited to the bill's author as part of his satire. This post, written as fiction, then went viral and was viewed by over two million people. My office heard from many constituents who read this satirical information online or heard it by word of mouth and were upset.

I completely share your concerns regarding any possible attack on the Castle Doctrine or the Second Amendment. I will work to preserve a person's right to defend themselves, their family and their property. In fact, Governor Abbott has also been quoted as saying that the "Castle Doctrine will not be reduced." To follow this bill or other legislation, use the Texas Legislature online website: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>.

Please know that my office takes the concerns of my constituents, on this and other issues, very seriously by including the information in our correspondence management system. I use the information on how my constituents feel about proposed legislation when studying the bills whether they are being heard in a committee or are scheduled on a House Calendar to come up for a vote before the full House of Representatives. Your thoughts and comments about the impact of draft legislation is invaluable to me as I work hard to represent you at the state Capitol.

Around the Capitol. Agencies Warn of Emerging Fraud Schemes Related to COVID-19 Vaccines. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

(CMS) are warning the public about several emerging fraud schemes related to COVID-19 vaccines. These agencies have received complaints of scammers using the public's interest in COVID-19 vaccines to obtain personally identifiable information (PII) and money through various schemes. The public should be aware of the following potential indicators of fraudulent activity:

- Offers for early access to a vaccine upon payment of a deposit or fee;
- Requests asking you to pay out of pocket to obtain the vaccine or to put your name on a COVID-19 vaccine waiting list;
- Offers to undergo additional medical testing or procedures when obtaining a vaccine;
- Marketers offering to sell and/or ship doses of a vaccine, domestically or internationally, in exchange for payment of a deposit or fee;
- Unsolicited emails, telephone calls, or personal contact from someone claiming to be from a medical office, insurance company, or COVID-19 vaccine center requesting personal and/or medical information to determine recipients' eligibility to participate in clinical vaccine trials or obtain the vaccine;
- Claims of FDA approval for a vaccine that cannot be verified;
- Advertisements for vaccines through social media platforms, email, telephone calls, online, or from unsolicited/unknown sources;
- Individuals contacting you in person, by phone, or by email to tell you the government or government officials

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require you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Tips to avoid vaccine-related fraud:

- Consult your state's health department website for up-to-date information about authorized vaccine distribution channels and only obtaining a vaccine through such channels.
- Check the FDA's website (<https://www.fda.gov/home>) for current information about vaccine emergency use authorizations.
- Consult your primary care physician before undergoing any vaccination.
- Don't share your personal or health information with anyone other than known and trusted medical professionals.
- Check your medical bills and insurance explanation of benefits (EOBs) for any suspicious claims and promptly reporting any errors to your health insurance provider.
- Follow guidance and recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other trusted medical professionals.

DPS ending waivers. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced earlier this month that it was ending its waiver to delay the renewal of driver's licenses (DLs) and identification cards (IDs) on April 14, 2021. So if your DL or ID expired since the start of the pandemic or will between now and April, you will need to renew them by the April deadline. Read more: <https://bit.ly/DLExtensionExpirationPR>.

Learn more Texas history. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is providing lots of opportunities to learn Texas history from the safety of your own home. THC's [History at Home](#) page provides free instructive resources about Texas history, preservation and heritage tourism. Their historic road trip itineraries found at can offer interesting getaways: https://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-road-trips?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

THC celebrates Christmas. The THC invites visitors to safely spend quality time and create fun memories at their state historic sites this holiday season. From historic Christmas celebrations, to socially distant holiday hikes and light displays, many of the state historic sites are hosting special events



Photo: Texas Historical Commission

throughout December:

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/celebrate-christmas-safely-our-historic-sites>

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/historicsites>. The health and safety of visitors is of the utmost importance so please call the site or check social media for updates before visiting.

Property tax exemptions for 100% disabled veterans. The Texas Tax Code, §11.131, entitles a disabled veteran who receives 100 percent disability compensation due to a service-connected disability and a rating of 100 percent disabled or of individual unemployability to a total exemption on the veteran's residence homestead appraised value. This exemption extends to a surviving spouse who was married to a disabled veteran

who qualified or would have qualified for this exemption if it was or would have been in effect at the time of the veteran's death provided:

- The surviving spouse has not remarried;
- The property was the residence homestead of the surviving spouse when the veteran died; and
- The property remains the residence homestead of the surviving spouse.

To learn more, refer to this Q&A document: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/exemptions/disabledvet-100-faq.php>.

Texas Capitol to reopen January 4. The Texas Capitol will reopen January 4, 2021, after being closed since March 17, 2020. The Capitol



grounds reopened December 15, after being closed since the end of May when protesters defaced some statutes and damaged some Capitol

doors. The 87th Texas Legislature convenes a week later on January 12. As soon as the health and safety protocols are announced for safely visiting the Capitol, I will post this information to my social media accounts.

If you plan on visiting the Capitol and plan to stop by my office, please call 512-463-0692 to make an appointment prior to your visit. I look forward to visiting with my constituents at the Capitol, but I also want to ensure that safety protocols designed to protect you and my staff are followed. Also, my office recently moved to

a new location in the Capitol Extension and is now located in E1.304.

Christmas & New Year's. As this very trying



year comes to an end, I want to take a moment to acknowledge what a difficult year this has been for many individuals and families in our local communities and across

the country. There have been many unfathomable losses and struggles. I hope these challenges have brought out the best in people while they have been looking out for their family, friends, neighbors and even strangers. My family and I want to thank you for your help fighting these challenges while keeping your families safe and protected. We wish you and your family a blessed Christmas and hope for a much better 2021!

My District office will be closed from December 21 to January 4; my Capitol office will be closed from December 23 to January 4. Please leave a voice mail, and my staff will contact you when they return to the office on January 4.

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.

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