

SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126
May 2020 Newsletter



Texas House of Representatives



District 126

**News
and
Information**



Coronavirus Impacts Texas

May has come and gone and thankfully, by the end of the month we have begun to see Texas businesses re-opening. The economic engine that drives Texas took a huge hit as a result of response to the virus shutting down non-essential businesses, that coupled with lost revenue, has hit just about every family in the state. As evidenced by the number of unemployment claims filed in the last 90 days, our average family's financial status remains fragile. Even large Texas based businesses such as Neiman Marcus have closed their doors and chain retailers like J. C. Penny have sought bankruptcy protection as a result of the impact from the COVID pandemic.

Governor Abbott has asked state agency leaders to find ways to cut five percent from their budgets, anticipating reduced revenue as a result of lower sales tax and lower petroleum production across the state. As we meet in Austin for the next legislative session in January 2021, recovering from the impact of the pandemic will be on the forefront of our minds and we will have a

clearer picture of where the Texas budget stands relative to its needs and available funds.

Travel related restrictions were lifted by the Governor on May 21st which eased the impacts for travelers who came from certain states or had connecting flights through cities on the quarantine list. Thankfully our state parks have been allowed to reopen on May 27th with some limitations on capacity.

COVID TESTING IN TEXAS

As of May 23rd, 870,935 people have been tested in Texas, with the vast majority of tests performed by private labs. Total statewide positive case count stands at 54,509 in 227 of Texas' counties as of that date with 1506 deaths statewide. Harris County has 10,921 positive cases to date, with 220 deaths. By the date of this newsletter, according to the Harris County COVID Dashboard, the Zip Codes that make up District 126 have 722 positive cases and 13 deaths.

Governor Abbott also ordered the testing of all residents and staff in nursing homes, psychiatric facilities, and assisted living centers.

Reopening Texas Businesses: Governor Abbott issued a new order on May 18th allowing the next phase of the reopening of specific businesses limited by capacity. Following that phased approach, as businesses begin to reopen, this will hopefully lighten the burden on those who have been out of work. Many of our residents work in food or service based industries and have been hit especially hard.

This phase include the following businesses (some with capacity limitations)

May 18th Opening:

Childcare Centers

Massage and personal care centers

Youth Clubs

May 22nd Opening:

Rodeo and equestrian events

Bowling alleys, bingo halls, simulcast racing, and skating rinks

Bars

Aquariums and natural caverns

May 29th Opening:

Zoos

May 31st Opening:

Day Youth Camps

Overnight Youth Camps

Waterparks

Youth/Adult Sports

Certain professional sports without in-person spectators

DPS

The Department of Public Safety has begun a phased re-opening of Driver's License Offices, offered by appointment only. Appointments can be made here:

<https://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/appointments.htm>

DMV

Tuesday, May 26, the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) is reopening

most Regional Service Centers for in-person transactions by same-day or next-day appointment only. Appointments may be scheduled at www.TxDMV.gov/appointment. The temporary waiver of vehicle title and registration requirements remains in effect. TxDMV will notify the public when normal services have resumed. Texans will then have 60 days to complete any overdue vehicle title and registration transactions.

Governor Abbott announces that CVS Health will be opening 44 new COVID-19 test sites at select CVS Pharmacy drive-thru locations across Texas and some of these locations are in and around District 126. These new sites will utilize self-swab tests and will be available to individuals who meet CDC criteria in addition to age guidelines. Patients must register in advance at CVS.com beginning Friday, May 22, to schedule an appointment. CVS Health also plans to have over 80 drive-thru testing locations in Texas by the end of May. Full announcement can be found at the Governors website: [Announcement](#)

TEA is promoting the optional, free at-home End-of-Year assessments that parents can sign their children up for between now and June 5. COVID-19 impacted the learning of all children this year and this academic checkup will help check your child's progress in key subject areas heading into the fall. Registration ends June 5 and can be accessed through [this TEA link](#).

The complete guidelines for business re-opening, with protocols and reopening dates can be found at the Department of State Health Services:

<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/opentexas.aspx>

As your State Representative, I continue to maintain contact with our county and state officials and provide you details and updates from those calls. I try to keep you posted on updates to news and announcements about local actions and state efforts to contain this virus. I try to provide the highlights so you aren't inundated and hope you find our information useful.

Please follow my Facebook page for daily updates and new information at: Facebook.com/samharless126

or our Twitter Page at

twitter.com/SamHarless126

Even through these challenging times, it remains my honor and privilege to serve the residents of District 126.

Sam Harless, State Representative

COVID-19 News and Resources

State of Texas Resources

Governor Abbott's Website for News

<https://gov.texas.gov/news>

Executive Orders (Proclamations)

<https://gov.texas.gov/news/category/proclamation>

Texas Unemployment Commission

April was the worst month so far for Texans filing for unemployment, with an unemployment rate of 12.8%, still slightly better than the national average of 14.7%.

District 126 has a population of 190,040 residents with an Unemployment Claim Count of 6,829 so far.

Unemployment Insurance Claimants Breakdown

Male: 3,247

Female: 3,577

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC): TWC has 88 personnel supporting COVID-19 with 11% of its staff in Texas teleworking.

Unemployment Insurance:

- Call centers are open 7 days a week 7:00 AM-7:00 PM.
- TWC Website, Information for COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions.
- Expanded the number of people doing pin and password resets with most of external relations working on them.

Top 5 Unemployment Insurance Claim Industries

1. Full-service restaurants
2. Temporary help services
3. Limited-service restaurants
4. Support activities for oil and gas operations
5. Department Stores

“The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) encourages individuals previously deemed monetarily ineligible for unemployment benefits to reapply online starting Sunday, April 5, 2020. This date marks the beginning of a new quarter and as such the base period for unemployment benefits and those previously ineligible may now qualify.”

TWC Website to Apply for Benefits: [TWC Unemployment Benefits](#)

Texas Workforce TeleCenter - 800-939-6631

TWC has a new Chat service on their website in the bottom right of the screen.

<https://www.twc.texas.gov>

The chart below indicates the weekly volume since February 22nd, bringing the total claims filed for this period to 2,236,314.

COVID-19 Unemployment Claims Filed

Week Ending	Total	Internet	Telephone	Other
2/22	7,053	***	***	***
2/29	7,393	***	***	***
3/7	6,368	***	***	***
3/14	16,176*	2,731	1,380	1,931
3/21	158,364*	141,632	13,678	3,054
3/28	276,185*	256,214	20,642	15,696
4/4	313,832*	321,000	20,000	20,000
4/11	273,567*	221,500	14,800	10,300
4/18	280,761*	283,900	21,600	19,600
4/25	254,084*	246,600	25,100	165,600
5/2	247,179*	237,400	28,300	20,200
5/9	141,672*	166,800	30,500	12,900
5/16	134,381*	145,400	29,400	21,700
5/23	119,300	89,100	17,800	12,200

Harris County Resources

Harris County and Harris Public Health has a lot of information available.

Harris County Public Health - [Harris Health Confirmed CoronaVirus Cases](#)

Harris Public Health Self Assessment Tool: [Self Assessment Tool](#)

Stay Home Order: <https://www.readyharris.org/stay-home>

Testing Sites

In Houston and Harris County, there are currently 6 testing FEMA supported sites with a capacity of 1,400 tests per day with enough supplies to last 20 more days. There are many times more tests being done by private labs outside the public testing sites. Along with their two permanent and four mobile testing sites, Harris County has partnered with Walgreens to create two additional drive through testing sites. These sites are a partnership project and are managed by Walgreens and results are available within 24 hours.

ReadyHarris Website: <https://www.readyharris.org/#resources>

Harris County Fire Marshal hotline to report businesses who are in violation of the "Stay Home, Work Safe" - 832-839-6941

Precinct 4 Commissioner Community Assistance - [Pct 4 Community assistance](#)

People can sign up to receive emergency alerts from Harris County at: [Ready Harris Alert Signup](#).

Also, 2-1-1 is a resource hotline set up by Harris County. If someone is in need of resources fast they can call that number and they will be connected to resources in their community. They can also text CV19 to 888-777. This hotline is available 24/7.

City of Houston

Houston Public Health Dept - <https://houstonemergency.org/covid19/>

Federal Resources / Websites

CDC- Center for Disease Control: [CDC Coronavirus](#)

Small Business Administration: [SBA](#)

SBA Paycheck Protection Program - [Paycheck Protection Loans](#)

An SBA loan that helps businesses keep their workforce employed (during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.)

FEMA Corona Response: [FEMA CoronaVirus](#)

Around The District

If you've heard of outstanding businesses in our community, please email us and let us know so we can properly recognize them.



Memorial Day Celebration

Doing my best to respect social distancing, I still wanted to take the opportunity to recognize those who served in our armed forces by going to a Memorial Day Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Tomball Museum Center WW2 Memorial.

Representative Tom Oliverson and Precinct 4 Commissioner Jack Cagle as well as other candidates for public office attended as well.

[Tomball Museum Center](#)



Tomball Hospital CEO Leaving

Along with our friend and former State Representative Debbie Riddle, I presented HCS Tomball Hospital CEO Eric Evans a flag flown over the State Capitol in appreciation of his leadership. The Tomball hospital has long been an essential component of the community and Eric has done a great job since his arrival in 2017. We wish him great success as he leaves for a new position in as head of HCA's Corpus Christi Medical Center.

[Tomball Hospital](#)



News For Harris County Precinct 4 Road And Capitol Project Update

Construction Projects:

Following are the capital improvement projects being pursued in our area.

- **Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Project – Phase 1A: Spring Cypress Road corridor between Telge Road and Louetta Glen Drive**The Spring Cypress Rd corridor was a joint participation project between Harris County and the Texas Department of Transportation. Improvements included the installation of new traffic signals, battery-back up systems to existing traffic signals, turn lane extensions and installations, and fiber optic interconnect along the corridor. The project was deemed substantially complete on March 11, 2020. Construction cost: \$5,522,835

- **Champions Drive from FM 1960 to Cypress Creek** Improvements included upgrading Champions Drive, from a 2-lane asphalt roadway to a 2-lane concrete pavement section with an improved drainage system. The roadway was opened to the traveling public the first week of April 2020 and the Contractor remains onsite to complete remaining work items. Installation of the landscape plantings should start within a few weeks. This is a Joint Participation project between Harris County Precinct 4 and Champions Municipal Utility District.
- The Contractor is expected to realize “substantial completion” within the next two weeks (barring any unforeseen circumstances beyond the Contractors control). Harris County will then conduct a final inspection of the Project and a punch-list will be created to include any items the Contractor still needs to address prior to Harris County’s final acceptance of the completed Project.

Projects in the Study/Design Phase:

- **Holderrieth Road Section 3 between Hufsmith-Kohrville Road and SH 99 at Champion Forest Drive:** The Holderrieth Road project is currently in the Study Phase and a timeline to continue project development including the construction effort has not yet been determined. The funding source for the project is Harris County, and the estimated cost of construction is TBD.

Hufsmith-Kohrville Road Segment 2 between Hollow Glen Lane and Ezekiel Road

- Planned improvements include upgrading the corridor as a 4-lane concrete boulevard with improved drainage accommodations, traffic signalization at Lacey Road and Ezekiel Road, and all components necessary for realizing a complete project. The Project is currently in the Design phase and Harris County will bid the project for construction purposes upon completion of project development.

Hufsmith-Kohrville Road Segment 3 between Ezekiel Road and Holderrieth Road

- Planned improvements include upgrading the corridor as a 4-lane concrete boulevard with improved drainage accommodations, traffic signalization at Woodland Shore Drive, and all components necessary for realizing a complete project. The Project is currently in the Design phase and Harris County will bid the project for construction purposes upon completion of project development.

In The District



Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce

Transportation and Mobility Committee

2nd Tuesday of each month
 Meeting Location:
 29201 Quinn Rd.
 Tomball, Texas 77375
 Upstairs Conference Room

**Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce
Transportation/Government Affairs
Committee**



The committee meets the 1st Thursday of each month to discuss governmental issues that confront their Cy-Fair area. They meet at the Chamber offices located at 8711 Highway 6 North, Ste. 120 Houston, TX 77095.

[Cy-Fair Chamber Website](#)



**Houston NW Chamber
Public Safety Forum**

Public Safety Forum Meeting:
4th Thursday each month
8:30 am - 9:30 am
Champions Emergency Services
District
12730 Champion Forest Dr.
Houston, TX 77066

[Houston NW Chamber Website](#)

[Visit our House of Representative Website:](#)

Contact Us

Capitol Office Phone - 512-463-0496

District Office Phone - 281-251-0194

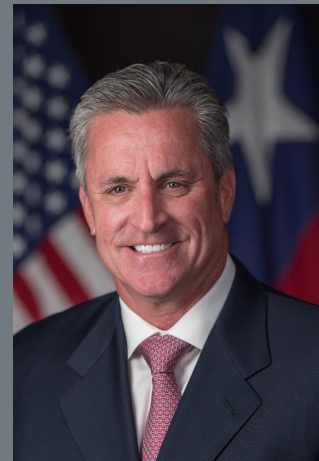
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