

# ***SAM HARLESS***

State Representative District 126  
October 2021 Newsletter



*Texas House of Representatives*



**Texas  
House District  
126**

**News  
and  
Information**



## **Special Session #3 Finally Reaches Sine Die**

This special session has primarily been about redistricting the boundaries for our Congressional Districts, our state Senate, House Districts and the State Board of Education. I'm sure this is always a challenging process and this year is no different. Especially with new mapping tools and new technology, it's pretty complicated to start with. The session wrapped up just after midnight on October 19th after passing property tax relief in [Senate Bill 1](#) and [Senate Joint Resolution 2](#), both authored in the Senate by Senator Paul Bettencourt. The bills would increase the homestead exemption from twenty five thousand to forty thousand. The property tax relief will be covered out of the state's \$4.4 billion surplus and the proposed amendment will be on the May 2022 ballot for voter approval. Also passed late last night was the dog restraint bill Senate Bill 5, Congressional Redistricting in Senate Bill 6, and supplemental appropriations from the American Rescue Plan Funds in Senate Bill 8. All of these bills are covered below.

## **Redistricting, Federal Appropriations, and More**

The Governor's Priority Agenda items for the third Special Session included:

Legislation relating to the apportionment of the State of Texas into districts used to elect members of the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas Senate, the State Board of Education, and the United States House of Representatives.

**House Bill 1** - Changes to the district boundaries for the Texas House of Representatives. This bill passed both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

**Senate Bill 4** - Changes to the district boundaries for the Texas Senate. This bill passed both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

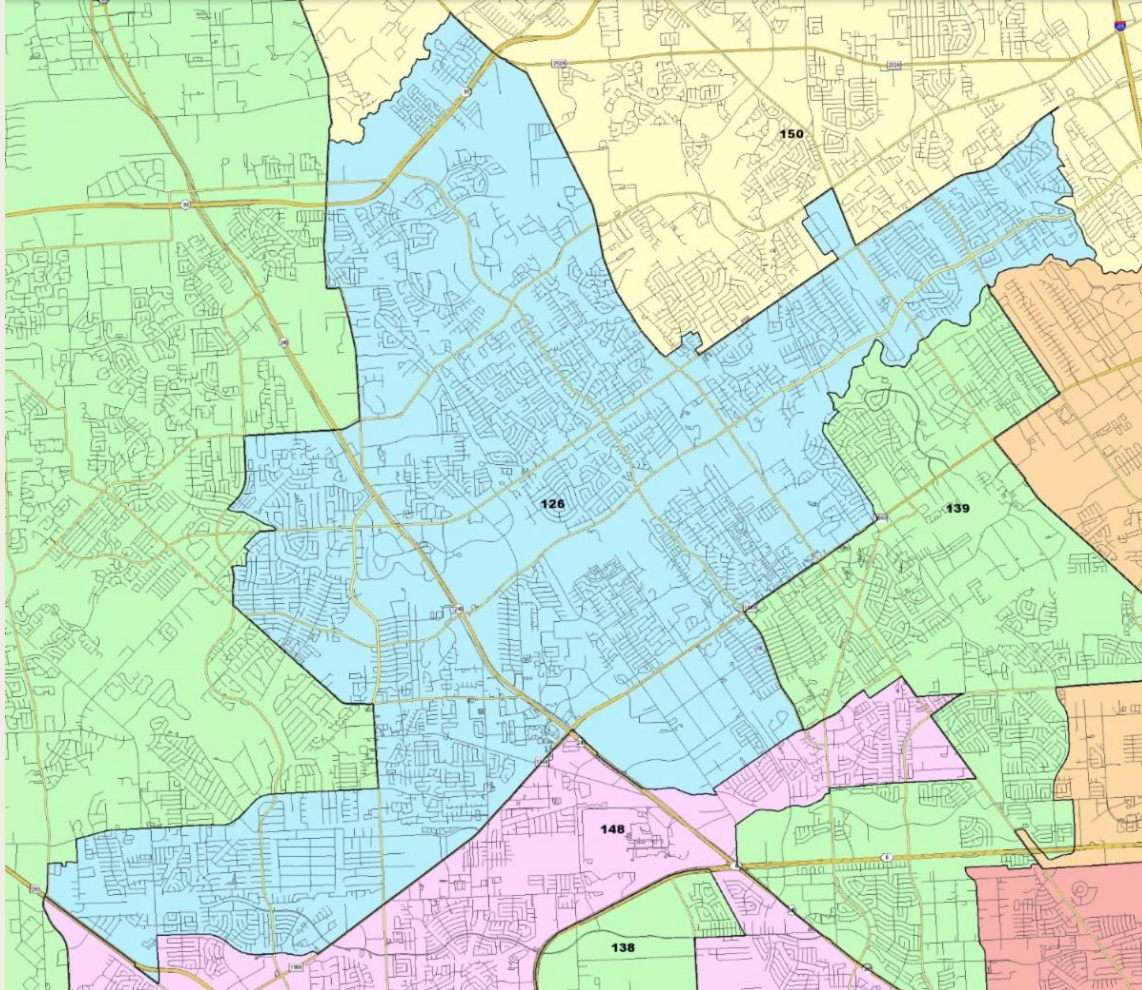
**Senate Bill 7** - Changes to the boundaries for the State Board of Education. This bill passed both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

**Senate Bill 6** - Changes to the boundaries for the United States House of Representatives. This bill passed both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

Our goal in determining Texas House districts is to have an area with about 190,000 residents with a deviation in voting precinct size that is less than 5% deviation from largest to smallest. We are required to use voting precinct lines, aligning a contiguous set of precincts into a district. I'm sure some constituents aren't happy about being moved to a new district, but with the rapid growth of our area, some dramatic shifts in representation have to be made, ultimately affecting representation for some.

The Texas legislature provides a map viewer that allows you to see the final approved version of all of these maps. **District Viewer**

The proposed map for District 126 is below.



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Legislation providing appropriations from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Pub. L. No. 117-2.

**Senate Bill 8** - This bill directs appropriations from the Federal Government to various departments and programs within the state. The Texas Department of State Health Services received \$2,462,085,730s from money received by this state deposited to the credit of the Coronavirus Relief Fund. The Governors Victims of Crime Fund received \$160,000,000, the Department of Criminal Justice received \$2,729,912,000, the Teacher Retirement System received \$286,337,761. The list of agencies and the amounts they received is in the link above. This bill passed both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

Legislation identical to Senate Bill 29 as passed by the Texas Senate in the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, disallowing a student from competing in University Interscholastic League athletic competitions designated for the sex opposite to the student's sex at birth.

**House Bill 25** - Relating to requiring public school students to compete in interscholastic athletic competitions based on biological sex. This bill was voted on and passed in both chambers and is on the way to the Governor.

Legislation regarding whether any state or local governmental entities in Texas can mandate that an individual receive a COVID-19 vaccine and, if so, what exemptions should apply to such mandate.

**House Bill 155** - Relating to exemptions from COVID-19 vaccine requirements. The bill filed by Dr. Tom Oliverson, State Representative from District 130 was heard in committee but did not advance any further.

Legislation similar to Senate Bill 474 as passed by the 87th Legislature, Regular Session, but that addresses the concerns expressed in the governor's veto statement.

[Senate Bill 5](#) - Relating to the unlawful restraint of a dog; creating a criminal offense. This bill placed specific definitions and conditions in proper care and restraint of dogs. The bill has passed both chambers and is awaiting the Governor's signature before becoming law.

### **Bail Reform**

Providing additional protections for the victims of crime and the community in a bail bond reform measure through a constitutional amendment was among the items added after the third special session had begun. A bail bond reform statute was passed in the second special session but the constitutional amendment with it failed to get the super-majority vote required for it to pass. The same measure filed in [Senate Joint Resolution 1](#), once again failed to gain the 100 votes necessary to pass the House during this special session.

# VICTORIES OF THE 3RD SPECIAL SESSION

IN THE 87TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

## FEDERAL RELIEF & RECOVERY FUNDS

**SB 8** appropriates **\$13.3 billion** in funding received by Texas from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The appropriations include:

**\$7.2 billion** for the Unemployment Compensation Fund to pay back outstanding advances received from the federal government

**\$2 billion** to the Texas Department of State Health Services for surge staffing at hospitals and other facilities, purchasing therapeutic drugs (including drugs for monoclonal antibody treatments), and for the operation of regional infusion centers

**\$500.5 million** to fund broadband infrastructure

**\$200 million** for cybersecurity projects

**\$160 million** to the Trusteed Programs within the Office of the Governor for grants to crime victims

**\$150 million** to deploy reliable next-generation 9-1-1 services

**\$100 million** to the Texas Department of Agriculture to provide supplemental funding to food banks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

## **SB 1 & SJR 2 HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION INCREASE**

SB 1 & SJR 2 delivers property tax relief to Texas homeowners by proposing a constitutional amendment increasing the the residence homestead exemption from property taxes levied for public school purposes to \$40,000.

## **SB 52 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR HIGHER ED**

SB 52 authorizes the issuance of **\$3.3 billion** in bonds for capital improvement projects at public higher education institutions.

## **HB 25 PROTECT UIL SPORTS**

HB 25 protects girls' UIL sports in Texas schools by ensuring girls are not forced to unfairly compete against boys.

## **SB 5 UNLAWFUL DOG RESTRAINTS**

SB 5 revises dog restraint requirements to ensure that dogs are restrained in a humane manner while minimizing the burden of compliance on owners.

## **HB 133 HIGHER ED BENEFITS FOR SURVIVORS**

HB 133 expands the eligibility for higher education benefits to certain adult child survivors of public servants.

## REDISTRICTING

**HB 1** modifies the composition of districts for the Texas House of Representatives.

**SB 4** modifies the composition of districts for the Texas Senate.

**SB 6** modifies the composition of districts for members of the United States House of Representatives from the State of Texas.

**SB 7** modifies the composition of districts for the State Board of Education.



## Tragedy Strikes Close To Home

### Precinct 4 Deputy Constable

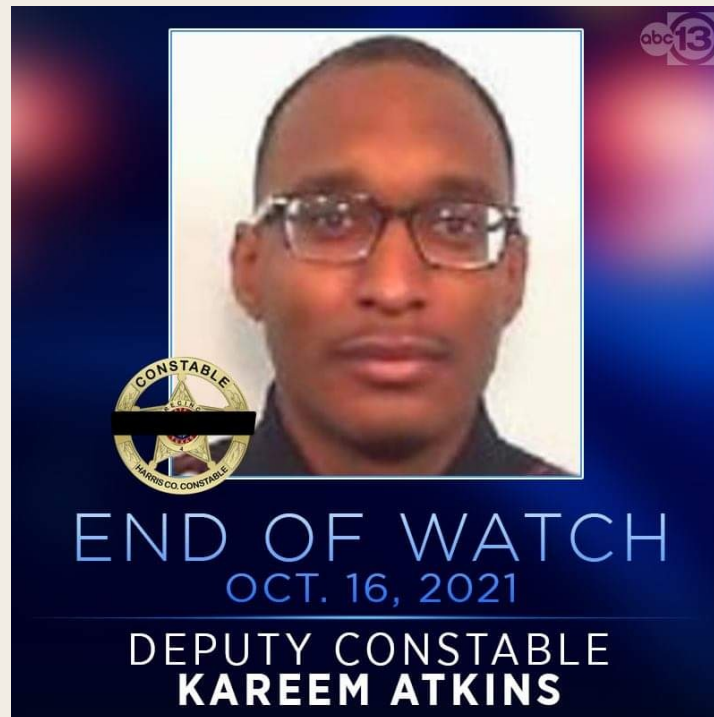
### Kareem Atkins Killed

[Fox26 News Article Link](#)

October 16 saw an horrific day for Precinct 4 Constable Mark Herman's Office. For the first time in its history, three deputy Constables were shot during a single incident. While working an off-duty job, the three deputies responded to

a disturbance and were ambushed from behind. All three deputies were shot by an assailant from behind, killing Deputy Atkins and wounding the two others.

Funeral services at Champion Forest Baptist Church and the procession brought out hundreds of fellow peace officers and community members to pay their respects as Deputy Atkins was laid to rest. Keep his family and co-workers in your thoughts and prayers as they deal with the grief and loss.



### **Operation Lone Star**

A number of people have commented in emails and phone calls on our situation at the border and many are probably wondering about the actions and resources we are using to protect our Southern border. The number of undocumented immigrants found crossing our border rose from 180,000 in June to 200,000 in July and along with them come inherent challenges of crime and community health. The Department of Public Safety's efforts cost a little over two million dollars a week in manpower and resources.

During an interim hearing for Homeland Security and Public Safety, we heard from both the Steve McGraw, the Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety and representatives from the Texas Department of emergency Management about their efforts along the border.

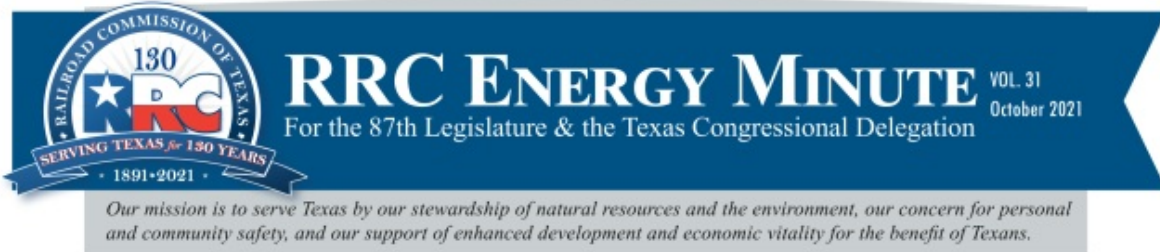
Since March, the DPS has deployed 500 Troopers to assist the U. S. Border Patrol and the National Guard. The Texas National Guard has also deployed 1,000 members of their forces, along with officers from Nebraska, Florida, Iowa and Ohio have also come to assist in "Operation Lone Star". Working with the border Sheriff's, Chiefs of Police, who are familiar with their own local jurisdictions, and our federal partners, their role is to augment the personnel and resources targeting illegal activity at the border. According to statements made during testimony, this massive influx of people crossing the border presents a significant security threat to our state.

According to news briefs provided by the DPS this surge in immigrant flow across the border has been accompanied by a commensurate increase in criminal activity. From March to mid-October there has also been a significant

amount of drugs seized, including 1,500 pounds of cocaine, 130 pounds of fentanyl, 10,000 pounds of marijuana, 1,500 pounds of meth and 34 pounds of heroin. They also seized \$3.8 million in currency. There have also been 272 firearms seized, including high powered rifles and military grade weapons that are crossing the border to supply the cartels.”

During this same time frame, there were over 73,000 migrant apprehensions and referrals to Border Patrol.

During testimony during the hearing from a mayor of a border municipality, it was revealed that no Covid testing was being done for those crossing and being released further increasing the risk of virus spread into the community.



## RRC Staying Ahead of the Game for the Upcoming Winter

While the RRC continues implementing legislation to help fortify the state’s energy supply, our staff is also taking proactive measures for Winter 2021-2022.

As operators come off the summer season and prep for winter operations, the Commission **issued a Notice to Operators** asking gas facility and gas pipeline facility operators to take all necessary actions as they prepare to operate during winter season 2021-2022.

We have sent notices to operators a couple of times this month reminding them of updating their information with their electric providers for critical load serving electric generation.

RRC staff also began site visits to observe winter preparedness of operators as they come off summer operations; we plan to complete between 15,000-20,000 of such visits before the end of the year.

## RRC Continues Strong Track Record of Inspections

By setting annual performance goals, the Legislature holds the RRC to high standards to ensure protecting public safety and the environment.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the RRC out-performed goals in the rigorous inspection programs over various industries we regulate – and gas, intrastate pipelines,

alternative fuels, and surface mining of coal.

Inspections are critical to preventing pollution, protecting residents, and even the safety of activities such as weekend barbecuing with the use of propane.

The following table shows many examples of the Railroad Commission’s success measures:

Category	Legislative Target	Achieved
Number of oil and gas well and facility inspections performed	189,367	308,922
Number of LPG/CNG/LNG safety inspections performed	20,000	20,604
Number of standard and follow-up comprehensive pipeline safety and inspections performed	3,129	3,598
Number of pipeline accident investigations and special investigations performed	1,200	2,043
Number of Coal Mining Inspections	400	416
Average number of oil and gas well and facility inspections performed by district office staff	1,199	1,816
Average number of LPG/CNG/LNG safety inspections per inspector	1,350	1,386



# ESD 11 Assumes EMS

On September 1st, 2021 the Emergency Services District 11 took over EMS activities from the contracted services previously provided by Cypress Creek EMS. We will try to provide monthly updates on their progress and activities.



## ESD 11 Update - By Jerry Thomas

On October 28 at 1:55 pm, ESD 11 reached 10,000 incidents, resulting in 5,636 transports since beginning service on September 1, 2021. Additionally, October 25 was a milestone day here in NW Houston. On this day, we received our 40th ambulance in just eight months.

Our partners REV Group, Inc., American Expedition Vehicles - AEV, and Southern Emergency & Rescue Vehicle Sales, have been exceptional and have worked well together to help us fulfill our promise to the ESD11 community. Despite COVID, workforce shortages, chip shortages, supply chain issues, stolen catalytic converters, and the impossible task of procuring new vehicles in today's market, this hard-working PARTNERSHIP made it happen.

We have completed our second new-hire orientation and are excited about adding 28 additional employees to the organization. In addition to completing this hiring session, we continue to interview and plan for a third hiring session in December.

We are incredibly grateful to the community for the vast support we have received and are honored to serve the citizens and visitors to our district. Our mission is to provide world-class healthcare with a focus on improving the patients' experience of care while improving the overall health of the population we serve and reducing the per capita cost of health care in our community.

If you are interested in learning more about ESD 11 or receiving a tour of the operation, please contact Jerry Thomas at 281.524.7660 or [jerry.thomas@esd11.com](mailto:jerry.thomas@esd11.com).

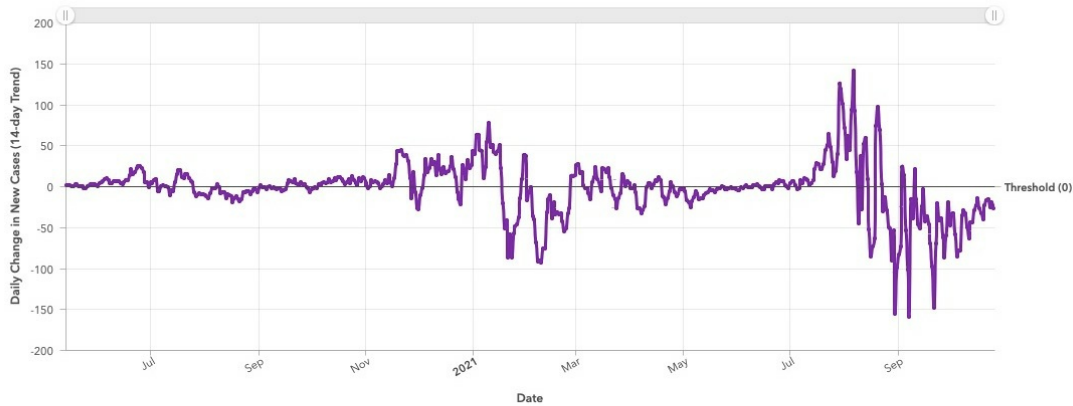
Visit our ESD 11 Website

## COVID STATS & INFO

COVID In Harris County



### New Cases Trend



Indicator: 14-day flat or decreasing trend in new COVID-19 cases Harris County, including City of Houston  
Threshold: 0 (same threshold Red > Orange > Yellow)

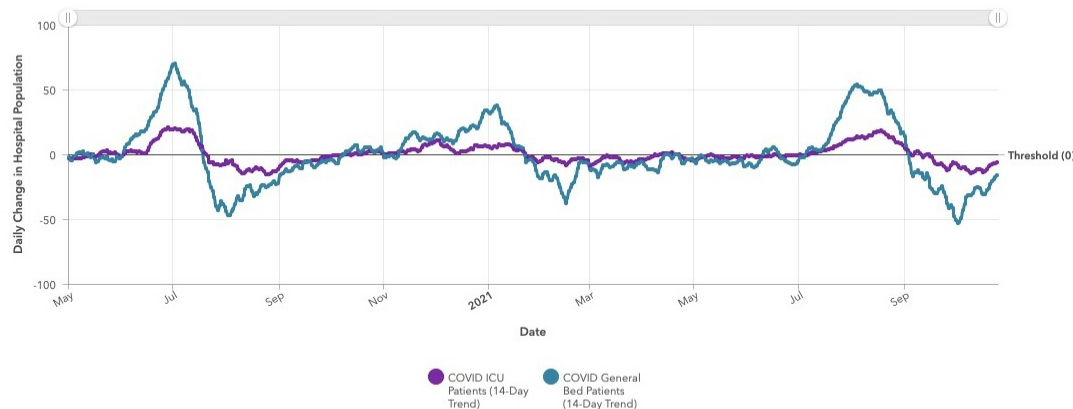
Date Updated: 2021-10-26

Data Source\*: Harris County Public Health (HCPH), Houston Health Department (HHD)

\*Due to backlogged cases that have increased over time due to delays in test reporting, missing information, and lags in processing, we have updated metrics involving case counts to only include cases that have specimen collection dates within 14 days of the date of reporting.

The chart above provides a reflection of the trend for new COVID-19 cases reported for all of Harris County.

### Hospital Population Trend



Indicator: 14-day flat or decreasing trend in COVID-19 hospital population in Harris County.  
Threshold: 0 (same threshold Red > Orange > Yellow)

Date Updated: 2021-10-26

Data Source\*: SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC)\*

\*Data is for Harris County including City of Houston.

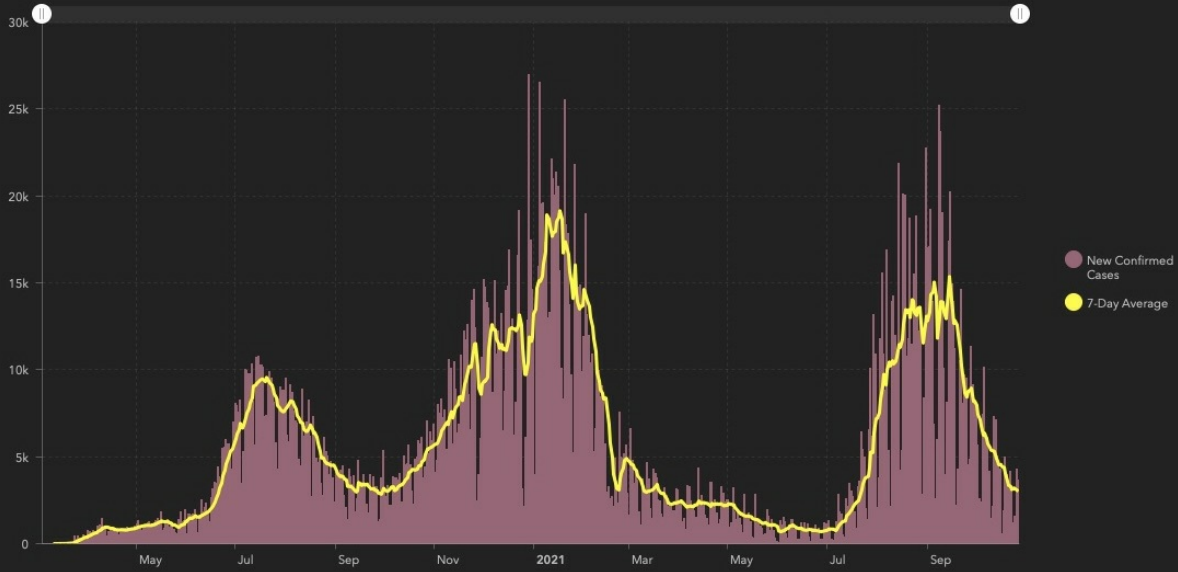
The second chart displays the hospital population trend of COVID cases. It should be noted there will be occasional time lags or delays in reporting that can affect total numbers. If you follow the news, you know we continue to deal with the Delta variant of the Covid Virus which is challenging our resources.

These charts can be found at the Harris County COVID Dashboard [www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)

**Harris County's threat level is still RED - Severe Threat** We have met four of the indicators to lower the threat level but Harris County remains at the highest alert level. At present, over 65% of Harris County's population have been vaccinated with at least one dose. 57% are now fully vaccinated. 81% of people older than 12 years of age have received at least some vaccination and those older than 65 make up the largest vaccination percentage group at 83% (Source - [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com))

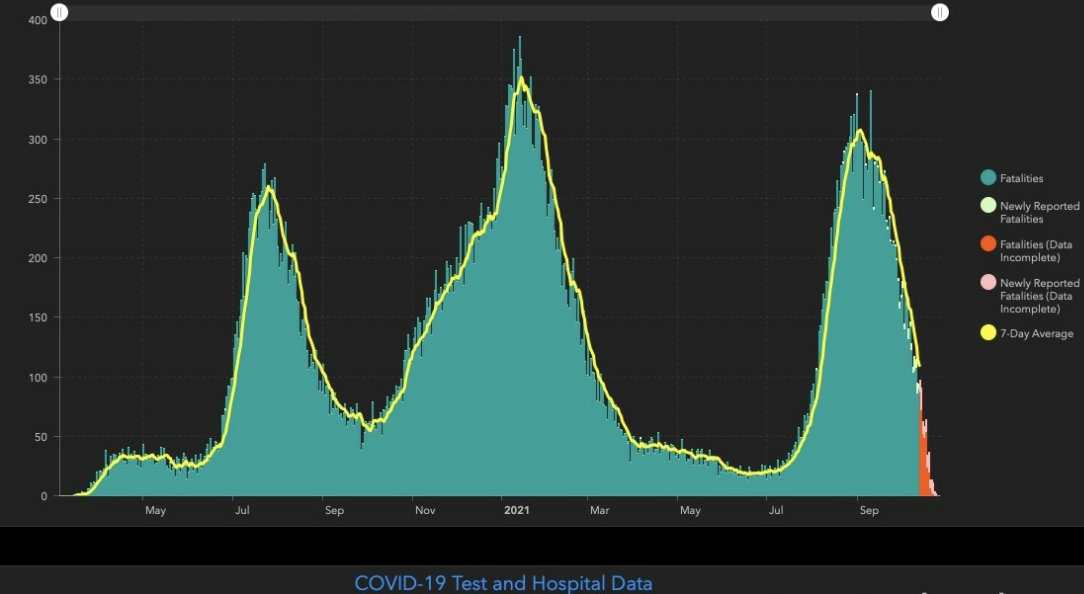
# Statewide New COVID Cases

New Confirmed Cases

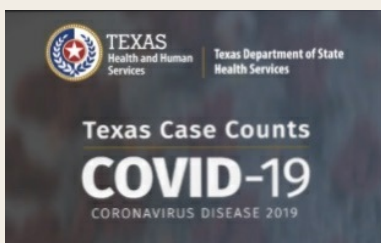


# Statewide COVID Fatalities

Fatalities by Date of Death



COVID-19 Test and Hospital Data



## Texas COVID Cases Statewide

To see charts reflecting details on Covid and vaccination activity follow this link to the [Texas Covid Dashboard](#)

## COVID VIRUS & VACCINES IN TEXAS

Choosing vaccinations are and should always be a personal and individual choice, though data seems to indicate a significantly reduced mortality rate for those who are vaccinated. While numbers continue to improve across the state, we encourage you to take the steps necessary to make your family and home safe. Please make an informed choice for you and your family in

conjunction with your family medical professionals and do your best to avoid being a contributor to the ongoing challenges we face fighting the spread of COVID.

To find a vaccine distribution site near you, the state has created this map:

[COVID Vaccine Provider Map](#)

If you are in the eligible tier, to find doses available in your area, check this link: [Vaccine Dose Availability Map](#):

If you need to find a testing site near you, follow this link:

[COVID Testing Locations](#)

Let me say again how proud I am to be chosen once again to represent the residents of House District 126, even during multiple sessions and such challenging times. I have continued to show up at the Capitol, prepared to do the "people's work". Texas has many important priorities and I remain focused on making our businesses and communities better places to work and live, something that all of us can agree on.

## Sam Harless

State Representative, District 126

Please follow my Facebook page for daily updates and new information at:

[www.Facebook.com/samharless126](http://www.Facebook.com/samharless126)

or our Twitter Page at

<https://twitter.com/SamHarless126>

## COVID-19 Resources

### Texas Workforce Commission

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) continues to explore options to keep the 2021 tax rates as low as possible for Texas employers as Texas and the entire nation continue to deal with the economic disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more about 2021 tax rates in the press release](#)

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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, called "Chat With Us". This new function will be able to answer most general questions from individual. <https://www.twc.texas.gov>

## Harris County Resources

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

Harris County Fire Marshal hotline to report businesses who are in violation of the County and State COVID-19 health and safety policies - 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/>

### **Ready Harris Accessible Alerts**

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management has launched the new Ready Harris Accessible Alerts (RHAA). This new system is providing access to alerts, warnings, and preparedness information to persons who are Deaf, Blind, Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf-Blind, or have low-vision through a new one-stop-website. To sign up, we encourage members of the community to visit <https://hct.ahasalerts.com>.

Community members can also text AHAS to (281) 609-9093 to sign up. The system will send our Ready Harris Alerts with sign language interpreting along with voice and closed captioning in English and Spanish before, during and after an emergency. The RHAA is compatible with video capable devices such as computers, tablets, cell phones and wireless Braille readers. With this new resource, HCOHSEM will also be able to reach individuals with low literacy in English and Spanish. This is HCOHSEM's latest effort to reach the whole community.

## 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

### **Our Schools and COVID**

The Delta Variant is working its way through our community as well as our schools. The percentage of Texas students with Covid is 0.379% out of the over 5 million enrolled students. Those cases nearly tripled in the last week, according to news sources, so we are clearly being challenged to control the

spread of the virus among children.

Our School Districts are closely monitoring COVID cases in the staff and student population. You can see the COVID Campus Dashboards for each of our area districts here:

[Klein ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Cy-Fair ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Tomball ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Spring ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

COVID statistics in Texas Public Schools may be found here:

[TEA School Campus COVID Link](#)

Scroll down on that site and you can get Excel reports that are searchable by school district or campus.

## In The District

**Cypress Creek F.A.C.E. and Centrum Arts Presents  
University of Houston Concert Chorale  
3:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 9, 2021**



The University of Houston Concert Chorale, under the direction of Betsy Cook Weber, has been recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral ensembles in the world. They have been featured multiple times at state and national conventions and have won or placed in prestigious competitions in the UK, France, Germany (2), Hungary, and Italy. They look forward to offering a varied program consisting of repertoire from all stylistic periods.

Performance Location: John Wesley UMC, 5830 Bermuda Dunes Dr., Houston 77069

Date & Time: 3:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 9th, 2021

Tickets: \$12 Adult, \$10 Senior, \$8 Child/Student, \$8/person Groups of 6/more

On Sale Date: Single Tickets – August 2, 2021

See the button below for the event

Centrum Arts



## **Pearl Fincher Museum of fine Arts**

### **Program Offerings**

The "Pearl" has so much more than just the physical gallery to offer the community. Their programs expand to include at-home instruction and virtual tours of exhibits. Be sure and check out those that interest you.

#### **The Story of Charles Goodnight**

Artwork by Lee Cable

Cobb Reception Gallery

September 22, 2021 – January 8, 2022

The Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts is pleased to present The Story of Charles Goodnight, a collection of work on loan from The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas. This series of stunning oil paintings and artist sketches by Lee Cable details the life and story of famed Texas cattleman Charles Goodnight. Goodnight's involvement in the recovery of Cynthia Ann Parker, along with his friendship with Oliver Loving, is chronicled in Cable's artwork.

The collection also demonstrates the historical wonder of the cattle drive and its importance in the history of the west. Alongside the artwork is a saddle and a touch-cart of western artifacts, including spurs, a powder horn, and lasso. Further educational resources and study guides are available through The Bryan Museum website by clicking [here](#).

This exhibition and accompanying education materials are available through The Bryan Museum with generous support from Jim Parkman, the Susan Kathleen Black Foundation, and the Hamill Foundation.

Image: Lee Cable, A Good Idea Gone Bad, oil on canvas, 2016

Upcoming Exhibitions

### **Pearl Virtual Tour Programs**

#### **VIRTUAL TOUR VIDEOS**

Take a stroll through our galleries from the comfort of your own home!  
Enjoy our newest Virtual Tour

**Vistas & Voyages**, Photographer Don Pine, narrator

[Click for Virtual Tour Video:](#)

**The John Cooper School: Fused Glass Fish**

[Click for Virtual Tour Video:](#)

[Lesley Humphrey: Saved by a Horse](#)  
[Click for Virtual Tour Video](#)

## **Commissioner Redistricting Takes a Dramatic Turn**

(Our thanks to Pct 4 Commissioner Cagle's Office)

In lieu of the regular monthly capitol project update, we thought it would be more informative to ensure everyone is aware of the somewhat radical changes for representation of our area of the County. Last Thursday, Commissioner's Court approved a re-districting plan along party lines, created by Commissioner Rodney Ellis, that essentially "flips" precinct 3 and precinct 4. For those of you who have previously been provided services from Commissioner Jack Cagle, may now find yourself in Commissioner Tom Ramsey or Commissioner Rodney Ellis' precinct service area.

Commissioner Cagle has recorded a video to his constituents that may be viewed here: [Cagle Video](#)

Changes to these service areas will take effect after the 2022 General Election and a copy of the approved map is below.

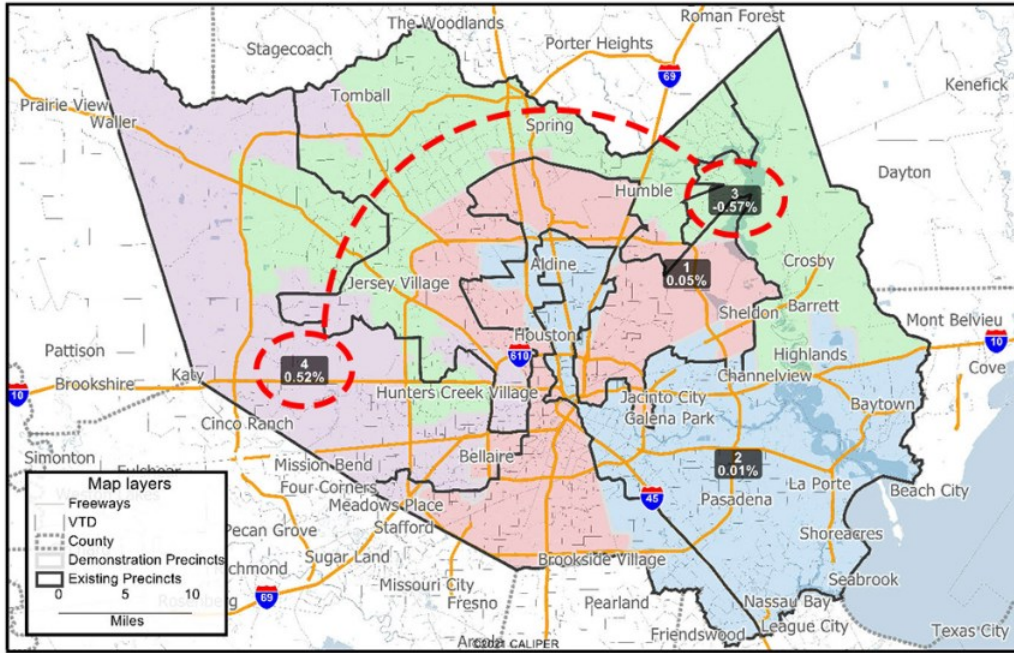
There are two articles listed below that cover some of the impacts and causes for the change in these commissioner precincts. Opinions vary on purpose and outcome and troubling statements made by our County Judge, point to some retaliatory purpose to provide majority members more sway in setting tax rates. The articles cover the issues more .

[Reduce Flooding Article on Redistricting](#)

[Houston Chronicle Article](#)

# Harris County Commissioners Court

## Ellis 3 Demonstration Map with Existing Precincts



### 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

Tomball Government Affairs  
Committee

### 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 HOUSTON Chamber of Commerce

Cy-Fair Chamber Website

### Houston NW Chamber Cancels Public Safety Forum



## Harris County Pct 4 Public Safety Forum

Tuesday morning Oct 12 at 8:30 am with doors open at 8 am for breakfast goodies and coffee.

Glorious Way Church  
11611 Champions Forest Dr  
Houston, TX 77066

Command staff Sheriff's and Constables will speak along with homeless organizations. What is the current situation? What is law enforcement doing about it? What can citizens do to help? To what extent are homeless a factor in this crime? This will be a panel discussion with time for Q&A.

The button below provides a link to sign up for our alerts and lists.



[Public Safety Forum Sign Up Link](#)

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

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