

SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126
October 2021 Newsletter



Texas House of Representatives



**Texas
House District
126**

**News
and
Information**



The Interim Finally Begins

After a marathon legislative year, the interim has begun. We've all gotten to go home, get some rest and catch up. We are looking at the issues the House Speaker will focus on during the interim and I have made a few suggestions for consideration in a few different committees on issues we heard from you about during the regular session.

Recommendation #1 to the Committee on Pensions, Investments, and Financial Services

Recommendation to examine the Teacher Retirement Systems current viability

and determine steps necessary to facilitate a 3% cost of living adjustment.

The issue of a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for our retired educators is of great importance to me, my constituents, and retired educators throughout Texas. It has been years since our retired educators received a permanent annuity increase to their retirement. Additionally, that particular COLA that was passed in 2013 applied only to retirees who retired on or before August 31, 2004. If the individual retired after that time, they were not eligible to receive this permanent increase in their pension.

As inflation and the cost of living continues to increase, I believe it is right and necessary to properly adjust the pensions of our retired educators.

Recommendation #2 to the Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee

Recommend the Committee consider guidance, recommendations, and resources needed to support courts in creating and implementing policies related to the transfer or other disposition of firearms for persons temporarily prohibited from possessing firearms pursuant to a judgement, bond condition or order issued as a result of family violence in accordance with Texas law.

Recommendation #3 to the Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee

Recommend the Committee explore how the enhancement of existing unlawful firearm possession violations through HB 1927 (87R) can meaningfully increase safety through the enforcement of temporary firearm prohibitions under Texas law.

Recommendation #4 to the State Affairs Committee

Recommendation that the Committee on State Affairs examine the implementation and efficacy of ERCOT's \$9,000/MWh cap that is used in order to entice energy generation, and consider possible changes to this model as deemed necessary and appropriate.

A great many Texans were harmed by the exorbitant rates charged under ERCOT's emergency cap at a rate that is unexplainable when the routine cost is more an average around \$50. Even though the legislature addressed winterization, nothing addressed costs to consumers.

Recommendation #5 to the State Affairs Committee

Recommend that the Committee on State Affairs study the impact that legal sports betting would have on corporate tax revenue, job opportunities, and property and sales tax revenue in the state of Texas.

Recommendation #6 to the State Affairs Committee

Recommend that the Committee on State Affairs study the current fiscal and societal impacts of illegal gambling behavior in Texas. Determine whether the legalization of gambling through the creation of a protected and regulated market would curb criminal activity associated with illegal gambling and assist in providing support to Texans suffering from problems related to gambling.

Result of Constitutional Amendment Voting

During this last November election there were eight different Constitutional Amendments set to be voted on by the citizens of Texas. These amendments resulted from various bills passed during the 87th Legislative Session, and here was the final outcome:

Proposition 1: PASSED 84% - 16%

- Authorize charitable raffles at rodeo venues.

Proposition 2: PASSED 63% - 37%

- Authorize counties to issue infrastructure bonds in blighted areas.

Proposition 3: PASSED 62% - 38%

- Prohibiting the state or a political subdivision from prohibiting or limiting religious services of religious organizations.

Proposition 4: PASSED 59% - 41%

- Changing eligibility requirements to certain judicial offices.

Proposition 5: PASSED 59% - 41%

- Providing additional powers to the State Commission on Judicial Conduct with respect to oversight of candidates for judicial office.

Proposition 6: PASSED 88% - 12%

- Allowing residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities to designate one essential caregiver for in-person visitation.

Proposition 7: PASSED 87% - 12%

- Homestead tax limit for surviving spouses of disabled individuals.

Proposition 8: PASSED 88% - 12%

- Homestead tax exemption for surviving spouses of military fatally injured in the line of duty.

Update On Critical Gas Facilities

As we get in to the winter months, many people still have questions and concerns regarding the weatherization and improvements to our power grid and supporting facilities. Drastic legislation was passed during the 87th Legislative Session to ensure that Texas doesn't experience a weather related winter blackout like we did in February, and while some of these changes will take time we do have some updates courtesy of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) and the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC).

In a joint effort with the RRC, the PUC recently adopted a rule related to the coordination and communication between critical gas facilities that supply fuel to electric generators. One of the largest issues that Winter Storm Uri exposed was a failure of communication and coordination between electric and gas industries during energy emergencies, which resulted in both parties shutting of services to each other. Based on legislation passed by the Texas Legislature, a new designation has been created for critical natural gas facilities that supply the majority of natural gas in Texas, and these facilities are

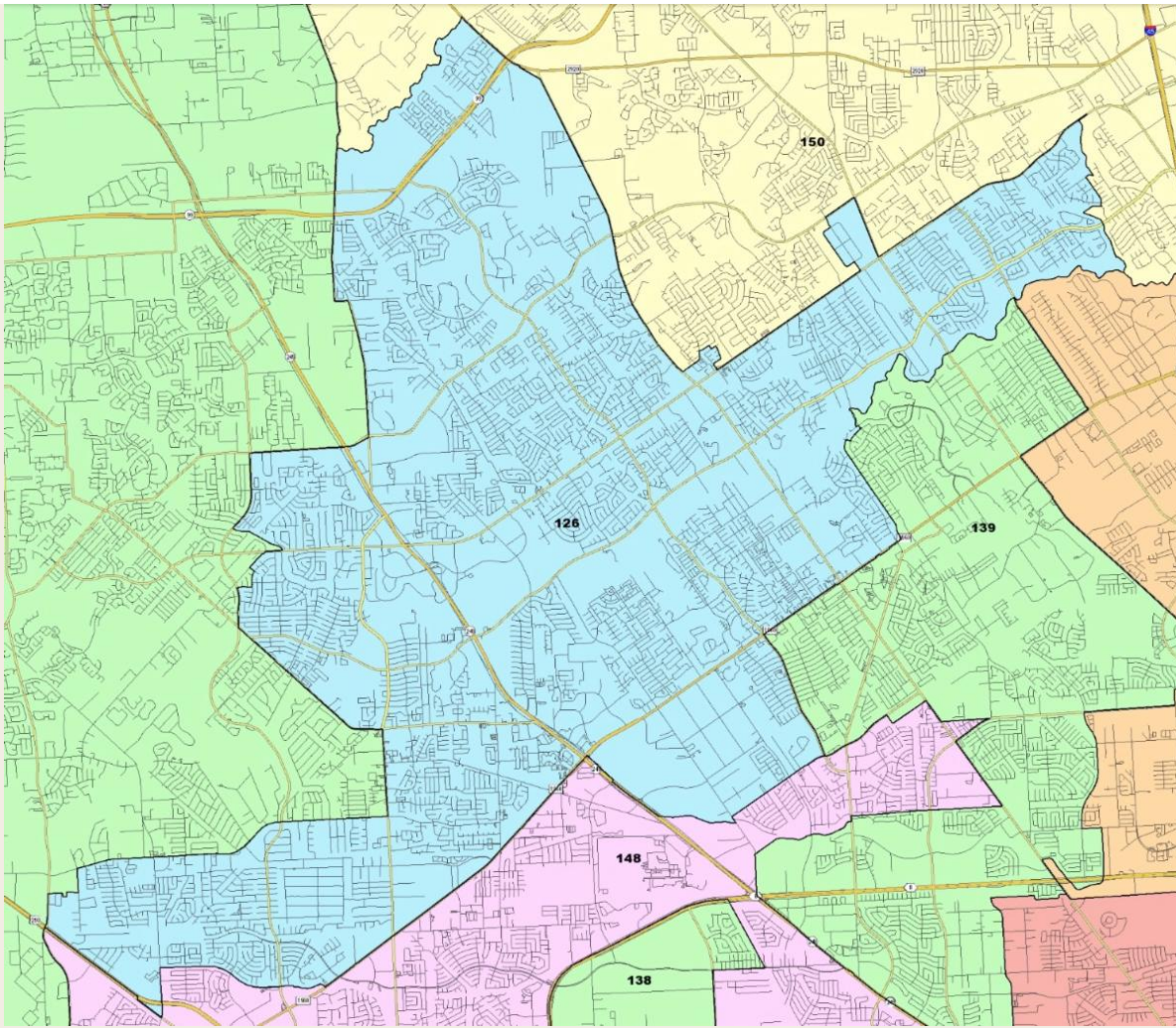
now also required to provide information to the utility from which it receives electric delivery service. In turn, this information provided to the electric utility must be used to prioritize natural gas in energy emergencies. This new rule will allow electric utilities to plan and respond much more accurately to keep natural gas facilities energized during an emergency.

Additionally, many constituents have recently contacted my office with concerns about reports of \$150 "exemption fees" that would allow important gas producers to opt out of weatherizing their wells. Upon hearing of this, my office immediately contacted the Railroad Commission and scheduled a meeting to discuss this, and thankfully we have good news to report. The reported \$150 "opt out" fee does not allow for any company to be exempted from weatherization. This is instead a standard application fee for any company that wants to apply for an exemption, and the RRC informed us that no company is able to receive an automatic exemption and most applications will be denied. Furthermore, thanks to new classifications for natural gas producers created by the RRC, many gas producers are being placed into a critical category that will mandate them to be weatherized with no exception.

While these updates and changes are certainly a move in the right direction and will be instrumental in securing our state's power grid, I know that there is still more work that needs to be done and I intend to keep pursuing continued improvements.

Redistricting FYI

For those who haven't seen our new boundary lines for District 126, we provide the new map below.



HD 126 Christmas Ornament

The House of Representatives has a wonderful tradition each year where House Members are given an ornament to have decorated and placed on the House of Representatives Christmas Tree in honor and representation of their House District and constituents.

Harmony Park, an 11th grader at Klein Collins High School, was chosen to paint this year's Christmas ornament due to her incredible talent. Harmony has a true passion for art and is dedicated to the medium of paint. She is a hardworking, reliable student and I was honored to give her the opportunity to showcase her artwork beyond the community.

If you find yourself at the State Capitol this holiday season, be sure to visit the House Chamber to see the 23 foot Christmas tree which is decorated with ornaments from all 150 Texas House Districts.



Our New District Director

This month Kelly Peterson joins our staff as our new District Director. Kelly will be attending the local meetings, events, and chambers of commerce activities for our area and we hope you get a chance to meet her. We are very happy to have her on our team.



A little more about Kelly:

Kelly Peterson is a native Texan, born and raised in Dallas. She is an '89 graduate of Lake Highlands High School. Kelly received her Bachelor of Science in Gerontology in '95 and her Master of Education, with an emphasis in Special Education in 2001, from The University Of North Texas. Her dedication to academics at UNT, allowed for her induction into Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest academic honor society that recognizes and honors exceptional academic achievement in the arts and sciences. She has been a resident of Northwest Harris County since 2006, where she has raised her two sons, Major and Gage, and a very happy labrador named Lola.

Kelly is an experienced parent, educator, volunteer and business owner. She was the Vice President and co-owner of Peterson Oilfield Consulting from 2017-2021. More recently she was the Owner/Director of Kelly Peterson's

Dance Company, established in 2014. She has served as President of The Woods Private School PTO; The Vice President of Secondary Grades for Northland Christian School PTO and has served as The Visual Arts Chair for the Northland Christian School Fine Arts Association. With her youngest attending Klein High School as a freshman, Kelly is busy promoting and fundraising for the KHS Varsity and JV Golf Teams, while maintaining her inclusive dance class teaching schedule. Driven by creativity, she takes pride in providing the best experience possible in her inclusive approach to education in the arts. As District Director her goals are to support and advocate for Representative Sam Harless, his constituents and to promote the growth, safety and prosperity of District 126.



MASO Donates to Pct 4 Deputy

The MASO organization provided a donation in support of Precinct 4 Constable Deputy Garrett who was injured in the triple shooting that claimed the life of Deputy Atkins. Chief Deputy Donald Steward was on hand to accept on his behalf. Our thanks to Ruben Villareal and his group for their generosity!

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 has continued to rise and along with it comes inherent challenges of crime and community health. As the graphic below depicts, the apprehensions year-to-date for 2021 stands at almost 1.2 million. The illegal drug seizures in cocaine and meth alone are staggering, but the numbers of the more dangerous Fentanyl are frightening. Over 160 thousand doses of Fentanyl have been seized this year, along with over 1,800 firearms. The Department of Public Safety's efforts cost a little over two million dollars a week in manpower and resources.



ESD 11 EMS News

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

“I see your ambulances everywhere!”

As the Community Engagement Manager, I have the privilege of interacting with individuals, groups, and different organizations on a very routine basis. I can attest I hear the opening statement repeatedly from

people I encounter.

Being the 911 ambulance provider for our service area is not a responsibility we take for granted or lightly. We shall continue to aspire to be a world-class mobile healthcare provider for our customers and employees and set standards for others to follow.

ESD 11 has been very busy Since September 1. We have experienced a little over 15,500 incidents that have resulted in 8,868 patient transports.

If you want to learn more about the ESD 11 ambulances in your community, please visit <https://esd11.com/our-fleet/> and take a virtual tour.

From all of us at ESD 11, thank you for the opportunity to serve, and please have a safe holiday season!

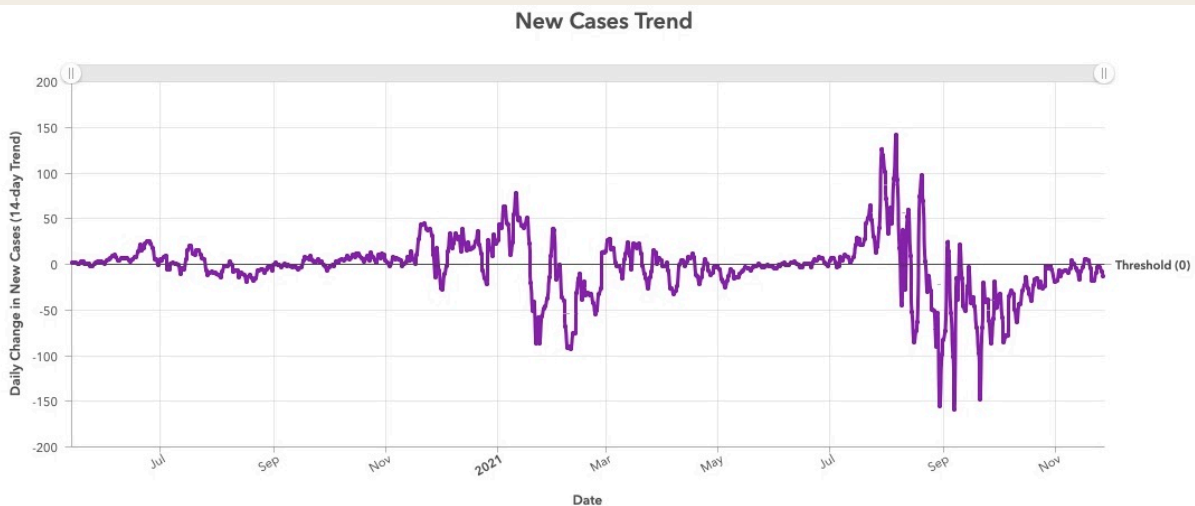
Jerry Thomas
Community Engagement Manager

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.

Visit our ESD 11 Website

COVID STATS & INFO

COVID In Harris County



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)

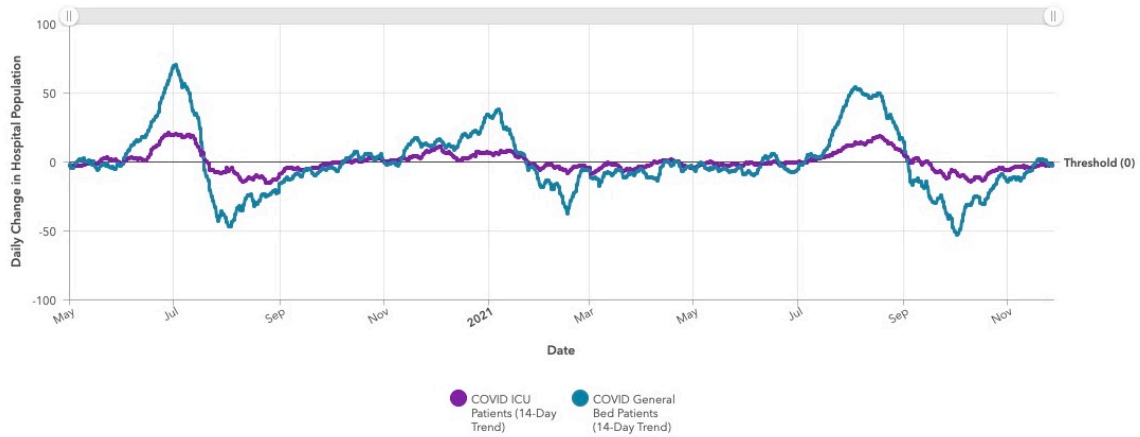
Date Updated: 2021-11-28

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)

Data Updated: 2021-11-28

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

*Data is for Harris County including City of Houston.

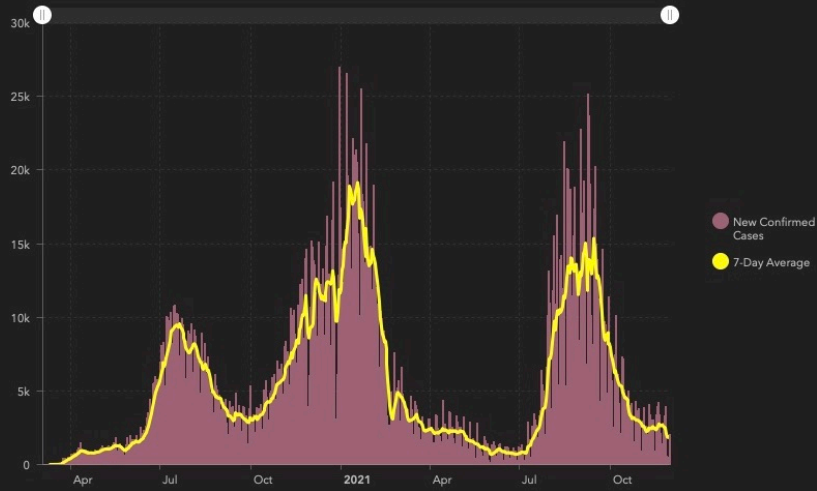
The second chart displays the hospital population trend of COVID cases. It should be noted there will be occasional time lags or delays in reporting that can affect total numbers. If you follow the news, you know we continue to deal with the Delta variant of the Covid Virus which is challenging our resources.

These charts can be found at the Harris County COVID Dashboard
www.readyharris.org

Harris County's threat level is currently YELLOW. - Moderate Threat/Stay Vigilant. At present, over 66.5% of Harris County's population have been vaccinated with at least one dose. 57% are now fully vaccinated. Almost 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. (Source - [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com))

Statewide New COVID Cases

New Confirmed Cases



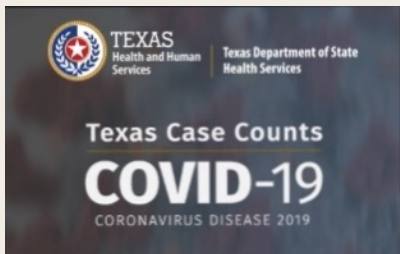
New Confirmed Cases

2,036

New Probable Cases

915

Statewide COVID Fatalities



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. With Delta and the new Omicron variants, there are lots of things to consider when it comes to your health.

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

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.](#)

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



Cypress Creek F.A.C.E. presents world class concerts and entertainment right here in our community. Be sure and look at their website and performance schedule. <https://cypresscreekface.org/performances/>

Be sure and check out the Star Lit! Concert Series Lineup for the remainder of the 2021-2022 season. The remainder of the season schedule:

- [The Four Freshmen](#) – Friday, December 31, 2021
- [Herb Alpert & Lani Hall](#) – Saturday, January 29, 2021

- The Greatest Love of All: A Tribute to Whitney Houston starring Belinda Davids – Saturday, February 19, 2022. This performance only will be at the Geiger PAC.
- Celtic Angels Ireland – Saturday, March 26, 2022
- Forever Motown – Saturday, May 14, 2022

Star Lit! Concert Series

The Free Children's Series performances are at 11:00 a.m. on four Saturdays during the 2021-2022 season. The performances are at Harris County Precinct 4's Mangum-Howell Community Center, 2500 Frick Rd. (inside Doss Park).

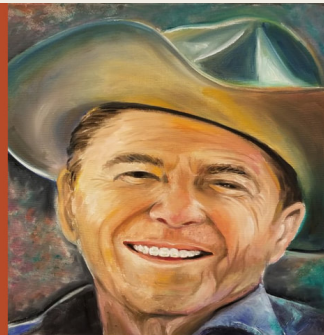
- A.D. Players presents "Apollo: To The Moon" – 11 a.m., Saturday, October 30, 2021
- Houston Brass Quintet Holiday Special – 11 a.m., Saturday, December 11, 2021
- Voices from the Past presents "Rhythm King" – 11 a.m., Saturday, February 12, 2022
- Houston Grand Opera's Opera to Go! presents "The Barber of Seville in Texas" (Bilingual) – 11 a.m., Saturday, April 23, 2022

The Free Children's Series is underwritten by The Centrum Arts League.

Free Children's Series

Ken Pridgeon
THE BRAVE

Hillery Community Gallery
November 11, 2021 -
January 8, 2022



**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.

We are fortunate to have a renowned and talented painter in our community and his work is routinely displayed at the Warrior Memorial Gallery on Cutten Rd. His new series "The Brave" is on display through January 8th, 2022.

Ken Pridgeon: The Brave

Marilyn Hillery Gallery
November 11, 2021 - January 8, 2022

Ken Pridgeon is a contemporary American painter, veteran and the founder of the Portrait of a Warrior Memorial Art Gallery. Renown for working directly with the families of fallen soldiers, Ken creates portraits in honor of their memory and accomplishments. Ken Pridgeon served 10 years in the United State Air Force as an electronics technician. He was always interested in art, starting off by painting store window advertisements. During his service in the Air Force, he would make colored family portraits for his fellow troops and offer his artistic skills in any way possible.

From 2010 to present, his career has been spent designing and painting memorial portraits and working directly with families of those who have passed at the Portrait of a Warrior Memorial Art Gallery. He first created the gallery in Baytown, Texas and has now relocated to Spring, Texas. His goal is to capture not only the likeness of the individual but their accomplishments, interests and character

PEARL FINCHER MUSEUM

Winter Wonderland

FAMILY DAY

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 18

OPEN FROM 11:00AM - 2:00PM

TONS OF WINTER ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY

HOT CHOCOLATE - BOUNCE HOUSE - ART
ACTIVITIES - CHRISTMAS CAROLS - FOOD
TRUCK - & MANY MORE

FREE FAMILY FUN! FOR MORE INFORMATION:

WWW.PEARLMFA.ORG
6815 CYPRESSWOOD DR.
SPRING, TX 77379



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:](#)

Stitched: Contemporary Quilt Art from the International Quilt Festival Collection

[Part 1 Tour](#) • [Part 2 Tour](#) • [Part 3 Tour](#) • [Part 4 Tour](#)

Lesley Humphrey: Saved by a Horse

[Click for Virtual Tour Video](#)

Commissioner Redistricting Takes a Dramatic Turn

The recent redistricting done by Harris County Commissioner's Court will change who is responsible for many county services for our area. The parks, our roads and bridges, and much more will now be under Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey. A lawsuit has been filed contesting this effort, but in the meantime, we are working to develop new contacts for the new Precinct 3 capitol projects manager, community assistance liaisons, and more so that we can provide you with the appropriate contact persons and information should this precinct change remain in place.

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

Changes to these service areas if not overturned by the lawsuit will take effect after the 2022 General Election and a copy of the approved map is below.

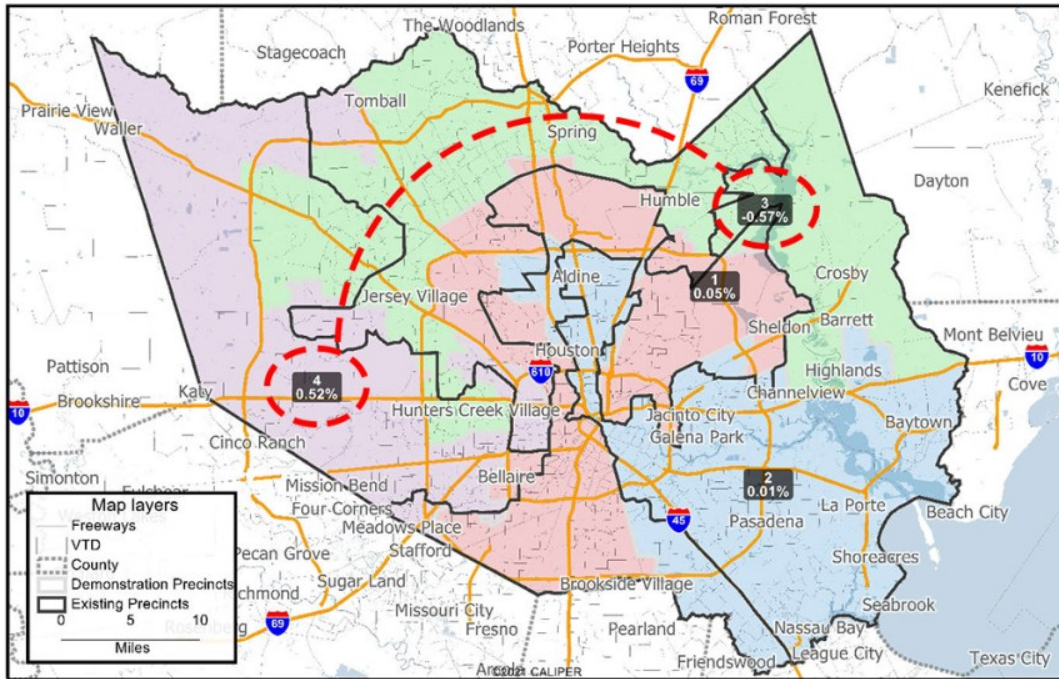
There are two articles listed below that cover some of the impacts and causes for the change in these commissioner precincts.

[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



Cy-Fair Chamber Website

located at 8711 Highway 6 North, Ste.
120 Houston, TX 77095.



Houston NW Chamber Cancels Public Safety Forum

The Public Safety Forum previously supported by the Houston NW Chamber has been cancelled as a program. The good news is that it has been picked up by Commissioner Jack Cagle's Office.

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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