



# My five cents...

A monthly column from Sen. Robert Nichols  
by Sen. Robert Nichols, Senate District 3

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Since my last column, Senate District 3 has continue to be affected by COVID-19 and a deadly tornado devastated communities in East Texas. Texans have come together to support each other, either through ensuring they receive necessary items, or by helping to clean up the wreckage of the tornado. I am grateful to live in a state where Texans come together to support each other in all circumstances.

Here are five resources to help you during this time:

## 1. Finding Jobs in Texas

I wanted to provide a few resources to help those who may have lost their job due to this pandemic and/or may be looking for a new position. The Texas Workforce Commission has compiled over 500,000 jobs on [www.workintexas.com](http://www.workintexas.com). You can also find assistance in creating a resume, education and veterans services and more. For those looking for positions in East Texas, there are two different websites that can provide assistance. They are the East Texas Council of Government site [www.easttexasworkforce.org](http://www.easttexasworkforce.org) and the Deep East Texas Workforce Solutions [www.detwork.org](http://www.detwork.org). Through each of these websites you will be able to find jobs posted in the area of your choice, where to find childcare services, and assistance for veterans who are looking for jobs.

## 2. Peace Officer Loan Assistance

Beginning in September 2020, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) will launch a loan repayment program for recently appointed peace officers. To be eligible for the Peace Officer Loan Repayment Assistance Program (POLRAP), an officer must have been initially appointed as a full time peace officer on or after September 1, 2019, have completed at least one year of employment, and have earned at least 60 hours from an eligible Texas higher education institution prior to becoming a peace officer. An applicant may receive up to \$20,000 in loan repayment assistance (\$4,000 annually, or one-fifth of outstanding loan balance, whichever is less). The application should be available around September, and to find out more information on qualifications you can visit [www.hhloans.com](http://www.hhloans.com).

### **3. Participating in the Census**

Every 10 years, a census is taken of the population in the United States and its five territories.. This information is used to draw the districts for State senators and representatives, as well as congressional seats. It also determines the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Through census numbers business owners and governments to determine funding and what is needed in local communities.

This year marks the 24th census that has been taken in the United States since 1790. If you have not participated in the census yet, its not too late. You can utilize the questionnaire that should have been sent to each household, by calling 844-330-2020, or online at

[www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov).

### **4. Texas Workforce Commission**

As of the writing of this column, approximately 23,500 individuals have filed for unemployment within Senate District 3, which I represent, and almost two million applications overall in the state. Due to this high volume many Texans have been unable to get through to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to file a claim or have their answers questioned.

TWC has asked all Texans when calling for information to utilize the chart below to determine the best time to call based upon their zip code. Texans will not be penalized for a delay due to call or user volume and claims for those affected by COVID-19 are eligible to be backdated to ensure that all receive the assistance they deserve. You can also visit <https://twc.texas.gov>.

#### **Recommended Call and Access Times**

- Area Codes Beginning with 9 - Mon-Wed-Fri 8:00 a.m.-Noon
- Area Codes Beginning with 3, 4, 5,6 - Mon-Wed-Fri 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- Area codes Beginning with 7, 8 - Tues -Thurs-Sat 8:00 a.m. - Noon
- Area codes Beginning with 2 - Tues-Thurs-Sat 1:00 p.m. -5:00 p.m.

### **5. STAR of Texas Awards**

Nominations are now being accepted for the Star of Texas awards. These awards honor all Texas peace officers and federal law enforcement officers or special agents acting in assistance to state and local law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical first responders who were seriously injured or killed in the line of duty on or after September 1, 2003. To be eligible for this years awards, the critical incident must have occurred between September 2003 and June 15, 2020. A person can receive more than one Star of Texas award, but they must be for different incidents. To nominate an individual, please visit [www.gov.texas.gov/cjd/star-of-texas](http://www.gov.texas.gov/cjd/star-of-texas).

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