



July 21, 2020

EDITION - 18



I've been in contact with several local superintendents, and I applaud their diligent and incessant work since the beginning of the pandemic to consider all viable options for going back to school. The overreaching goal, of course, is to provide a high quality education for all Texas students in a safe environment for students and teachers.

It's an understatement to say that Texas is in the midst of the most complicated back to school season of our lifetimes. In the last few months of the pandemic, I have watched the public and private schools in my senate district – and all over the state – truly go above and beyond to understand what parents want and need in order to have confidence that their children can go back to school safely. Implicit in this outreach to parents is an acknowledgement of a subtle but very important assumption: Different families have different wants and needs. Some families have a parent who can stay home to facilitate an online school experience; many do not. Some families have a family member with underlying health conditions; some do not. Some families have a parent who can work from home; many do not.

As a state leader, I am also keenly aware that many Texans can't really get back to work unless students get back to school. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) "strongly advocates that all policy consideration for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school," and the AAP creating guidelines for school re-entry. Therefore, to help school

districts ensure safety and protection of students, teachers, and administrators on campus, TEA is offering resources and guidance to districts for safely providing in-person instruction for students. TEA, in collaboration with Governor Abbott's Strike Force to Open Texas and the Texas Department of Emergency Management, in providing personal protective equipment, thermostats, and hand-sanitizer to all schools. Additionally, TEA provides [Public Health Planning Guidance](#).

It's important to recognize the wants and accommodate the needs of Texas families. Offering options allows parents to choose the best educational environment and learning opportunities for their children. Everyone's situation is unique and everyone's decision should be respected and honored.



STATE OF TEXAS UPDATES

Plea to Open All Texas Restaurants

My colleagues and I recently sent a letter to Governor Abbott asking him to amend or clarify his executive order to broaden the definition of restaurants to keep more Texas working, give customers more options, and keep our state economy moving forward.

The clarification we requested from Governor Abbott includes classifying an establishment that holds a license or permit from Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission as a restaurant if it meets the following criteria and abides by the Minimum Standard Health Protocols for Restaurants:

1. Has a permanent kitchen on its premises with an exhaust hood and fire suppression system;
2. Has the kitchen operational during all hours that the business is open, with multiple entrees available for consumption on the premises; and
3. Only serves patrons who are seated in accordance with the social distancing protocols for restaurants (aside from to-go and delivery service).

I believe that the policy decisions for how a business should operate, including making safe conditions for their employees and customers, is best determined by the business. I also believe that consumers should have the right to say how and if they

choose to participate in the market-place at this time. The ability to make changes to their policies and procedures is best left up to local businesses in collaboration with clear public health guidelines from the CDC, state, and local public health authorities, and I will be encouraging businesses to make accommodations for their employees and customers.

Government should always seek to protect liberties, and Texans should have choices and the opportunity to make their own decisions. During these times of uncertainty, I believe in the discernment and ability of families and school leaders to make the decisions that are best for their students.

Budget Shortfall Projected for Our State

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar projects a \$4.58 billion shortfall for the end of FY 2021. This significant revenue decrease is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and recent volatility in oil prices. Because we are required to maintain a balanced budget in Texas, the Legislature will have to budget accordingly next legislative session to ensure that we spend within our means while meeting the needs of Texans next biennium.

Tax Free Holiday

This year's sales tax holiday begins Friday, August 7 and ends at midnight Sunday, August 9. During this weekend, Texas shoppers can take advantage of saving money by making tax-free purchases on most clothing, shoes, school supplies, and back packs (sold for less than \$100). Purchases may be made at a retail establishment, online, or by phone from a seller that does business in Texas.

Texas Armed Service Scholarship

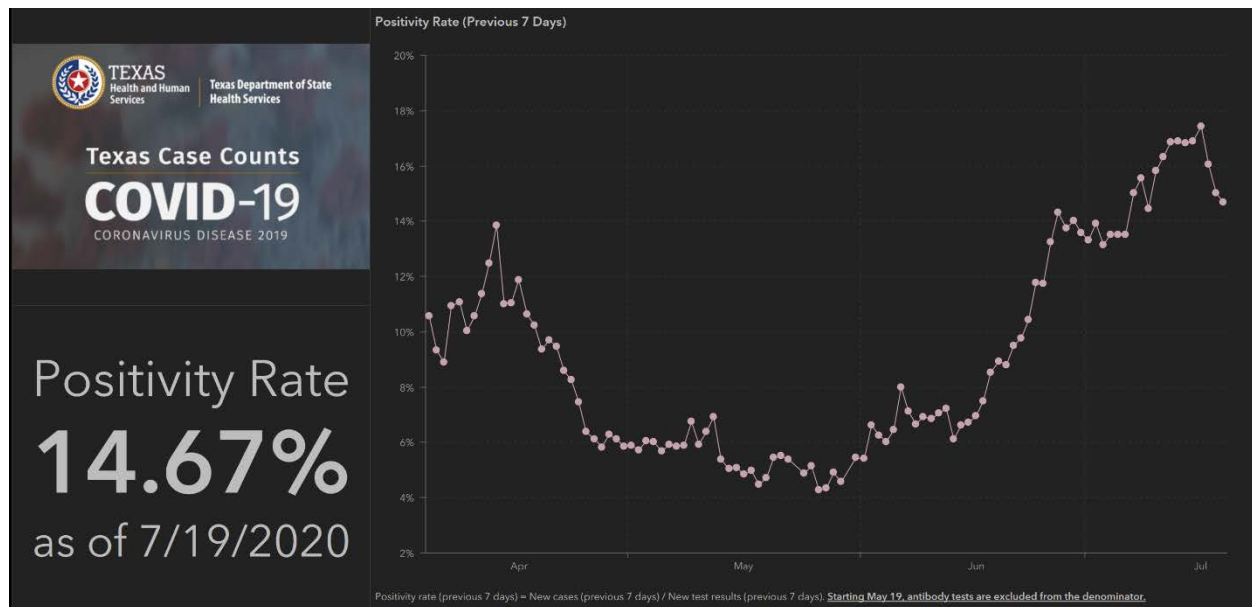
My office is currently accepting applications for **the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP)**. Interested applicants should be constituents of Senate District 8 and send a completed application, resume, and a letter outlining future goals to my district office (604 S. Watters Road, Suite 100; Allen, Texas 75013) or by email (Angela.Paxton@senate.texas.gov) on or before July 31, 2020.

TASSP is a program created by the Legislature in 2009 to encourage students to complete a baccalaureate degree and become a commissioned member of the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard, Texas State Guard, U.S. Coast Guard, or U.S. Merchant Marine or become a commissioner officer in any branch of the U.S. armed services. Each legislative office has the opportunity to

award a single scholarship each year for a college student who is in an ROTC program and meets the academic performance requirement.

To apply, please visit my Senate webpage and [click here](#) for a copy of the application and instructions.

COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION



The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is [tracking COVID-19 cases](#) and updates it site with the latest information each day.

- Texas has 332,434 confirmed cases of COVID-19 out of 3,269,897 tests. An estimated 177,871 individuals have recovered.
- There are 5,374 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Collin County residents out of 68,524 tests. An estimated 4,394 individuals have recovered.
- There are 41,266 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Dallas County residents out of 290,697 tests. An estimated 22,416 individuals have recovered.

*These numbers are as of July 20, 2020.

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