



Pete's Periódico

Moving Forward in Difficult Times

by Sen. Pete Flores, Senate District 19

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From the beginning of this crisis, two primary factors drove decisions by Governor Greg Abbott and other state leaders: data and doctors. Governor Abbott eased restrictions and slowly opened Texas businesses, restaurants, bars, and other places in early May. Recently, Texas has experienced a new rise in COVID-19 cases, causing the Governor to re-evaluate and adjust regulations to keep Texans safe and businesses open.

Seeing the rates of positivity and hospitalization rise, Governor Abbott decided in late June to immediately close all bars, limit restaurant capacity and outdoor gatherings of 100 or more people in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. The number of confirmed cases is rising in part due to increased testing—Texas has completed over 2,820,000 tests.

In Texas at time of writing, there are an estimated 136,000 recoveries and 3,200 fatalities, according to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. In other words, 99.98% of Texans who contracted COVID-19 survived—the true number is likely higher, as not every individual with COVID-19 realized they were sick and received a test. One death is too many, but we can be grateful for such a high recovery rate.

If you feel sick, do not hesitate to get tested. Testing centers are up and running across Senate District 19 in San Antonio, Uvalde, Hondo, and Del Rio. Constituents can also find testing in nearby cities such as Kerrville, Junction, San Angelo, Odessa, and Presidio. Texas has mobile testing sites serving underserved areas, including many cities in Senate District 19. Constituents interesting in obtaining a COVID-19 test, especially those who live far away from the cities listed above, should be on the lookout for a mobile testing site, available by appointment only. More information on testing can be found by calling (512) 883-2400 or visiting www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus or txcovidtest.org.

A central question many are wondering as summer passes its midpoint: will schools be open in the fall? Earlier this month, the Texas Education Agency issued guidance for a safe return to school, including giving the parents the option between on-campus instruction or remote learning. The TEA is hoping to give parents flexibility and I agree: parents and local school boards should determine what is best for their school children.

A one-size-fits-all approach is not the answer to the various needs of our Senate District and our state. Senate District 19 is incredibly diverse—what works for Bexar county schools will not work for Val Verde county. These decisions should be made locally. I believe Texas can honor its constitutional requirement to provide a quality education without mandating districts to operate beyond their ability.

For those students in college pursuing service in the armed forces, I encourage you to apply for the Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program. I have the ability to nominate one constituent for a scholarship up to \$10,000. Applicants must be completing a baccalaureate degree and intending to become a member of a branch of the military. Constituents interested in applying need to submit a cover letter, resume, and essay by July 31, 2020—more information can be found at www.flores.senate.texas.gov

For the sake of struggling businesses across this state, I sincerely hope Texas does not revert to a full economic shutdown. I remain optimistic we can work together and emerge from this crisis in true Texas fashion: stronger and more united, continuing to lead as the best state in the nation.

Sen. Pete Flores is a Republican Texas Senator representing Senate District 19.

To contact Sen. Flores, call his Capitol office at (512) 463-0119 or send an email to District19.Flores@senate.texas.gov. For daily updates, follow him on Facebook: /SenatorPeteFlores and on Twitter: @PeteFlores_TX.