

# SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126  
December 2021 Newsletter



*Texas House of Representatives*



**Texas  
House District  
126**

**News  
and  
Information**



## The End Of The Year

Wrapping up a fairly long year with several contentious legislative sessions and coming up to our third year in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is definitely the time to look forward to a hopeful new year.

First, let me say how thankful I am to be serving as your State Representative for District 126. Now that the candidate filing period has ended, it appears that I will be unopposed in the next election and I look forward to serving the constituents of my District here during the interim and in Austin in the next legislative session.

I hope all of you had a great holiday and like me, look forward to a break from some of the challenges we've had this year.

I will continue to do the "people's work" and confront the challenges that affect our community and our state. 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>

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## Update On Texas Energy System

Our constituents, like most Texans, remain concerned about the status of our electrical grid, our energy market, and the overall preparations for extreme winter weather following February's systemwide failure. The first real test of the grid during cold weather came at the end of the year with freezing temperatures in the Houston area and in the low teens across much of North Texas.

The 87th Legislature mandated a number of changes that will play out in the coming months. The new ERCOT Board, Public Utility Commission, and Railroad Commission have all undergone reviews and rule changes targeted towards greater reliability of our energy system.

In a recent press conference last month, the Public Utility Commission and ERCOT Board presented an update on a series of changes.

- ERCOT and the PUC are operating at a fast pace to enhance and ensure Texas' grid reliability for this winter. This includes improved checks and balances stemming from legislation passed during the 87th Legislative Session, and ERCOT will also be operating with enhanced energy reserves in the event of an emergency.

- The PUC has adjusted their scarcity pricing mechanism, lowering the cap from \$9,000/MWh to \$5,000/MWh. During Winter Storm Uri, the original \$9,000/MWh cap resulted in exorbitant rates being charged for available energy and this harmed many Texans. The PUC and ERCOT believe this change strikes a good balance between incentivizing power generation and



enabling conservation during scarcity events. This new market cap will go into effect at the beginning of January and hopefully it will dramatically cut electricity charges for customers during extreme weather.

- ERCOT stated that more generators have been brought online since the winter storm and they have also changed policies in order to utilize all possible energy and emergency options before asking citizens to conserve power.

- Power plants are being required to winterize and they have been given a deadline of December 31st to comply, and ERCOT will be conducting inspections to confirm that proper winterization has been done. Sites who are found to be in violation of these winterization requirements will be penalized up to \$1M/day per incident of violation. This is a drastic and unprecedented increase from previous penalties and will help ensure that power generators comply with these new winterization requirements.

- ERCOT has also already begun inspecting the sites of generating companies that have attested to proper winter preparedness. By December 29th, ERCOT plans to have inspected over 300 generating units and 20 transmission providers for proper winterization. These 320 entities account for 85% of lost MW/h experienced during Winter Storm Uri.

- The Texas Energy Reliability Council, created during the 87th Legislative Session, is up and running with the primary focus of enhancing communication and coordination between state agencies, the electric industry, and the natural gas industry. Furthermore, in the event of an energy emergency, ERCOT, the PUC, the Railroad Commission, TxDOT, and the TCEQ will be shoulder-to-shoulder in the state operations center. This will provide a central point of communication for agencies and industry partners to provide the best possible response and service for Texas.

- It was also restated that Texas' largest and critical natural gas suppliers, who in total provide about 80% of that state's daily production of natural gas, will not be able to opt-out of weatherization efforts. Other entities who do not fall under this automatic category will still have to submit an application for the ability to opt-out of weatherization. They will then undergo strict scrutiny to determine the role they play in the state power grid and energy generation, and then the Railroad Commission will make a decision on whether to approve or deny their request.

- Finally, both groups wanted to reassure Texans that thanks to these changes and more that are still ongoing, the ERCOT grid is more powerful and stable than ever. They also stated that there are still more changes and improvements coming and Texans go into this winter knowing that their lights will stay on.

### **Progress Report on Electricity Supply Chain Mapping**

In accordance with SB 3 (87R), the newly created Texas Electricity Supply

Chain Security & Mapping Committee recently submitted a report to the Texas Legislature outlining the committee's progress to date on its objectives of mapping the electricity supply chain and identifying sources needed to operate critical infrastructure; recommending a secure communication system for vital parties to ensure that electricity supply is prioritized for critical infrastructure during extreme weather events; and, include a list of best practices and recommended oversight and compliance standards to prepare natural gas and electric service facilities to provide service to critical infrastructure in extreme weather events.

The Committee has informed the Legislature that they have made substantial progress in identifying sources for information needed to create the electricity supply chain map. They will be using a combination of existing data from Committee member agencies and third party data to create a comprehensive electricity supply chain map. This initial supply chain map is required to be completed by September 1, 2022, but the Committee is working towards, and on track to, completing this map well before that date.

The PUCT, RRC, and ERCOT have all been actively working on multiple aspects of the electricity supply chain map, and much of this work began in the summer of 2021 and is ongoing. The Committee has also met monthly since August 2021 and has established various teams composed of staff members from the PUCT, RRC, and ERCOT to compile the data that will be needed for the supply chain map.

ERCOT has an electrical grid website dashboard that provides an informative look at conditions of the electrical grid, supply & demand, as well as the production of renewable energy from wind and solar. Their dashboard can be found here. <https://www.ercot.com/gridmktinfo/dashboards>

## Railroad Commission Update

As one of the important legs supporting Texas' energy stool, we thought it was equally important to update progress in this area as well. Regulating natural gas is one of the primary responsibilities of the Commission.

The Railroad Commission has undergone a number of changes and improvements this year and they have a slide presentation that provides a year end review. <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/resource-center/reports-and-publications/year-in-review/>

The Railroad Commission of Texas assessed \$719,929 in fines involving 195 enforcement docket against operators and businesses at the Commissioners' Conference on Tuesday. The Commission has primary oversight and enforcement of the state's oil and gas industry and intrastate pipeline safety. Seven dockets involved \$144,729 in penalties after operators failed to appear at Commission enforcement proceedings.



Operators were ordered to come into compliance with Commission rules and assessed \$85,350 for oil and gas, LP-Gas or pipeline safety rule violations. Pipeline operators and excavators were assessed \$439,850 for violations of the Commission's Pipeline Damage Prevention rules.

Inspectors from multiple RRC divisions have conducted site visits to observe winter preparations. RRC inspectors visited more than 2,550 facilities so far including a broad spectrum of natural gas infrastructure. These include oil and gas leases that have more than 14,000 active producing or disposal wells; large gas storage facilities; processing plants, close to 50 pipelines directly serving gas-fired power generators; and about 150 other transmission pipeline facilities used to transport natural gas. The RRC will continue this effort throughout the rest of the year and the upcoming winter.

"Between these ongoing site visits and calls with executives of the top natural gas producers and pipelines, by volume, we know first-hand through onsite observations that operators are undertaking measures that will provide gas supplies under normal and emergency conditions," said Ted Wooten, Director of RRC's Critical Infrastructure Division. "The Commission takes preparation for this upcoming winter very seriously. Among all facilities we have visited so far, our inspectors physically observed that natural gas facilities have put in place devices and processes to harden their assets against cold weather conditions.

The measures go beyond what's being done on the equipment itself. For example, in order to keep operations up and running some operators will provide temporary shelter and supplies on leases for their staff, all part of a proactive plan to reduce any concerns for traveling on icy roads and the associated worker safety. By putting eyes on site and boots on ground, our inspectors provide that verification of gas companies' preparedness."

Among the many actions taken in response to Winter Storm Uri, last week the Commission [adopted rules on critical designation of natural gas facilities](#) which help ensure gas continues to flow during energy emergencies. The agency is also working closely with the PUC in developing attribute layers (i.e., shapefiles) that will be included in a map of the state's electricity supply chain and natural gas infrastructure along that chain. These efforts will help prepare Texas even better for extreme weather conditions.

## Questions on a 4th Legislative Session

We have received a number of emails and calls regarding a short fourth special legislative session focused on vaccine mandates, a so called "Fourth In Four", which would attempt to file and pass a vaccine mandate bill in just four days. This is a lofty goal and likely unachievable for such a contentious issue. It takes a call by the Governor to enact a special session of the legislature and it requires a quorum of 100 members to convene one. Thus far, the Governor has not decided to call such a session.

While I am not completely opposed to the concept of a special session, my belief is the likely outcome of any such effort would result in immediate legal challenges. Essentially, what is at the heart of the issue is an individual personal freedom, the right of freedom of choice, particularly when it comes to taking a vaccine. This issue is being played out in courts across the country right now. I have joined in Amicus Briefs and letters to the Federal Government opposed to vaccine mandates and hope the appropriate courts will resolve this issue as soon as possible. Just recently, a federal judge granted an injunction, blocking the military's effort to punish Navy's Seals for refusing the vaccine. To quote the Judge, "loss of religious liberties outweighs any forthcoming harm to the Navy" and that "even the direst circumstances cannot justify the loss of constitutional rights."

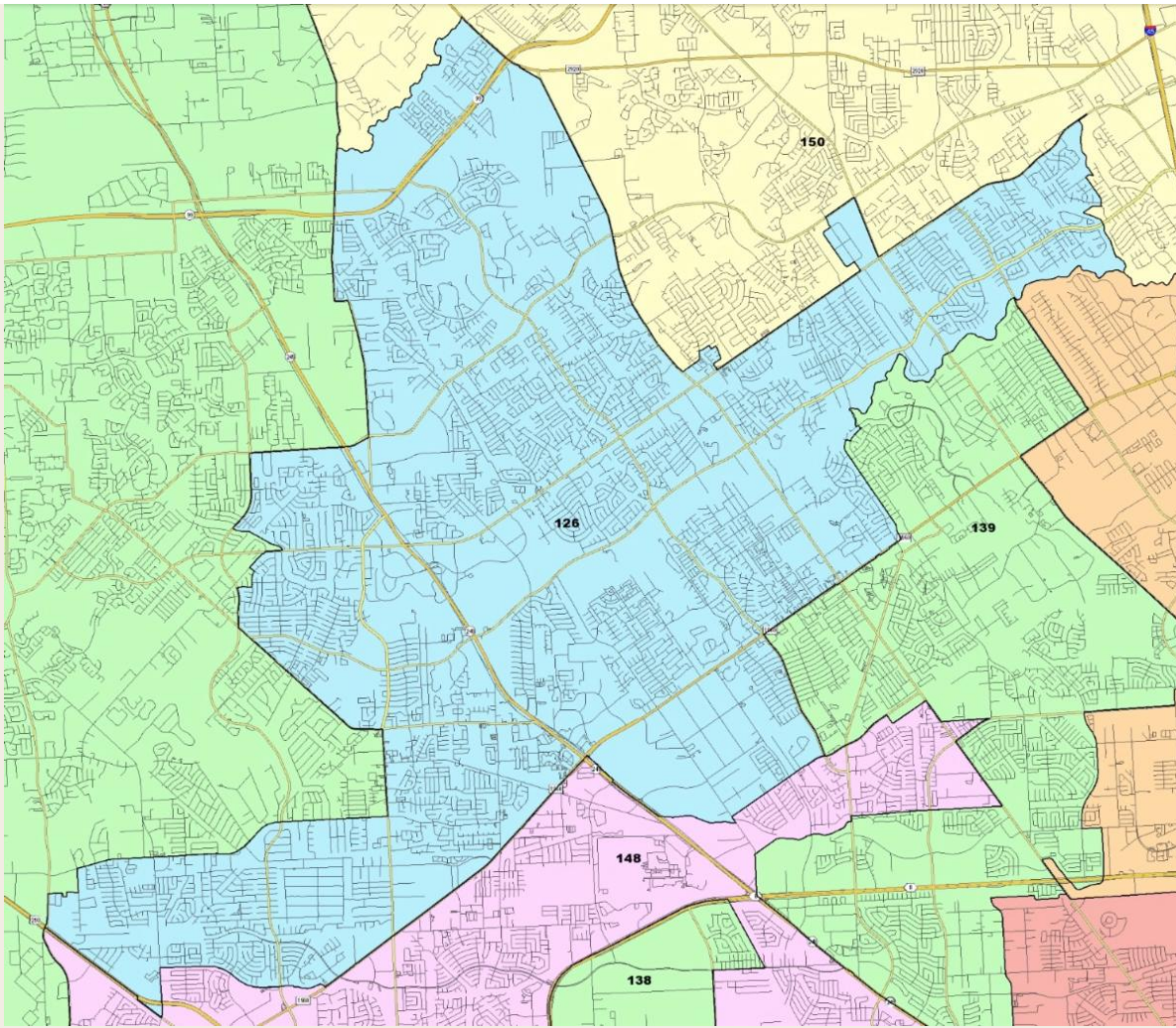
That being said, I am not anti-vaccine and am myself and my family all have voluntarily vaccinated. It always has been and should be a matter of personal choice, based on your own unique individual medical situation, or faith. We continue to encourage you to take appropriate actions to keep yourself, your family, and those you come into contact as safe as possible.

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### **Redistricting FYI**

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





## Operation Lone Star December Report

Governor Abbott announced this month that an additional \$38 million would be allotted to Operation Lone Star. During the press conference, the governor stated that uncontrolled illegal immigration has resulted in more than 1 million people being apprehended. Abbott said people aren't only illegally immigrating from Mexico but are using the Texas border to get in from several countries across the globe, including China and Russia.

The new funds include \$19.5 million for special equipment; \$16 million for additional overtime and pay, including for court personnel; and some \$800,000 for travel costs from non-border counties to send personnel to the border. Since the beginning of March, the Governor has awarded more than \$74 million to border counties and cities in support of Operation Lone Star, reinforcing the to help our federal partners in their efforts to secure our southern border.

The DPS [Border Wall and Operation Lone Star Summary Page is here](#)





## ESD 11 EMS News



### 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 this repeatedly from people I encounter.

ESD 11 Update: The system has been extremely busy in December. Current monthly statistics,

12/1 – 12/29



Total Incidents - 5015  
Patient Transports - 2814

Due to the recent surge in COVID cases and increased hospital wait times at some of our local emergency rooms, our crews have been working incredibly hard to serve our community with the level of service our community deserves. Despite the challenges, we are very proud to report we maintain our response time compliance to the district.

We thought we would share some recent feedback from one of our citizens:  
*On Christmas Eve, I had to call 911 because I was experiencing severe abdominal pain and nausea. Within minutes ESD 11 paramedics arrived and went into action to relieve these symptoms. I was so grateful for Bethany, who discreetly assisted me with my personal needs before leaving home! She and Kolby were awesome as they worked to care for me. I want to thank them for getting me to the hospital, but in the process, handling everything so professionally that it was a smooth transition! By the time I arrived at the hospital, my excruciating pain and nausea had been mostly relieved with the administered medication. Thank you both again for your amazing service! Only the best to you in the new year and beyond!*

As we enter 2022, we ask that you please be safe and wish you a Happy New Year. We will be here when you need us.

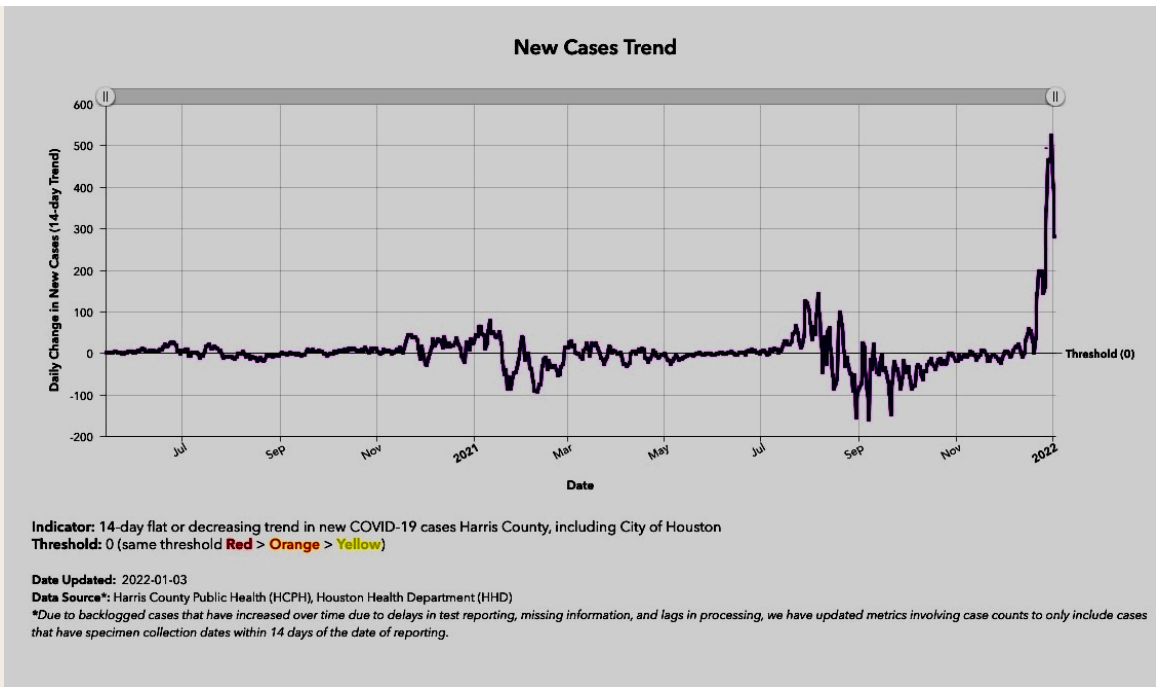
Jerry Thomas  
Community Engagement Manager

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

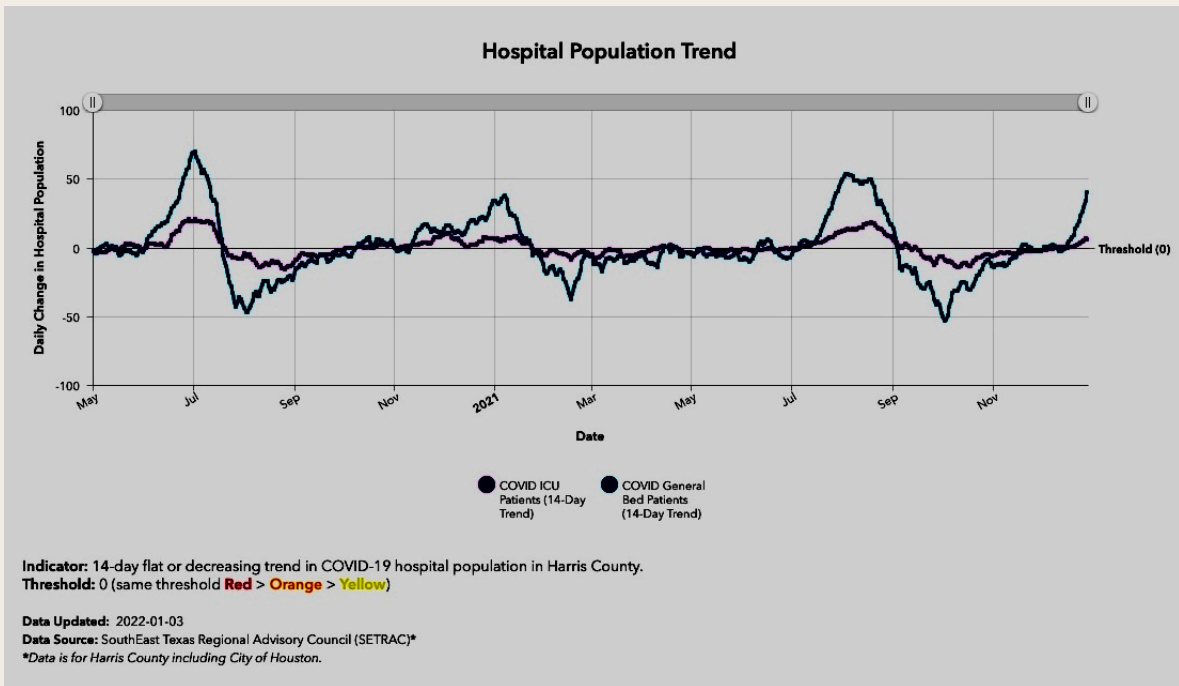
[Visit our ESD 11 Website](#)

## **COVID STATS & INFO**

### **COVID In Harris County**



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



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)

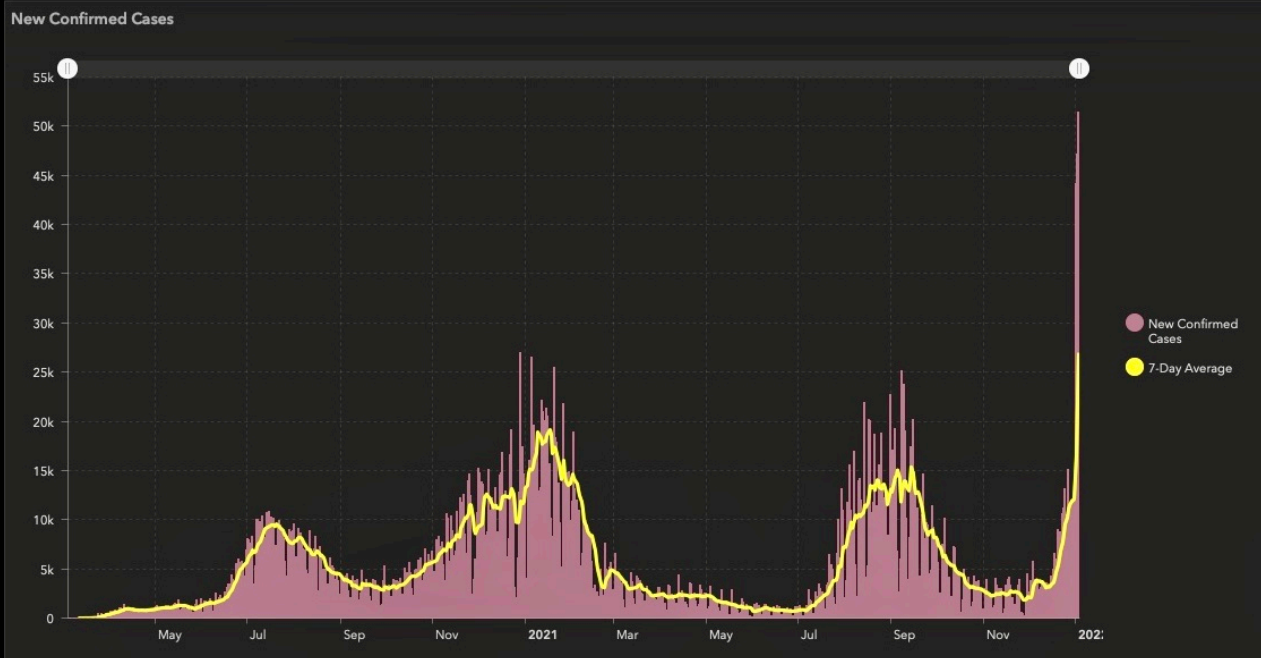
**Harris County's threat level is currently Orange. - Minimize Contacts.**



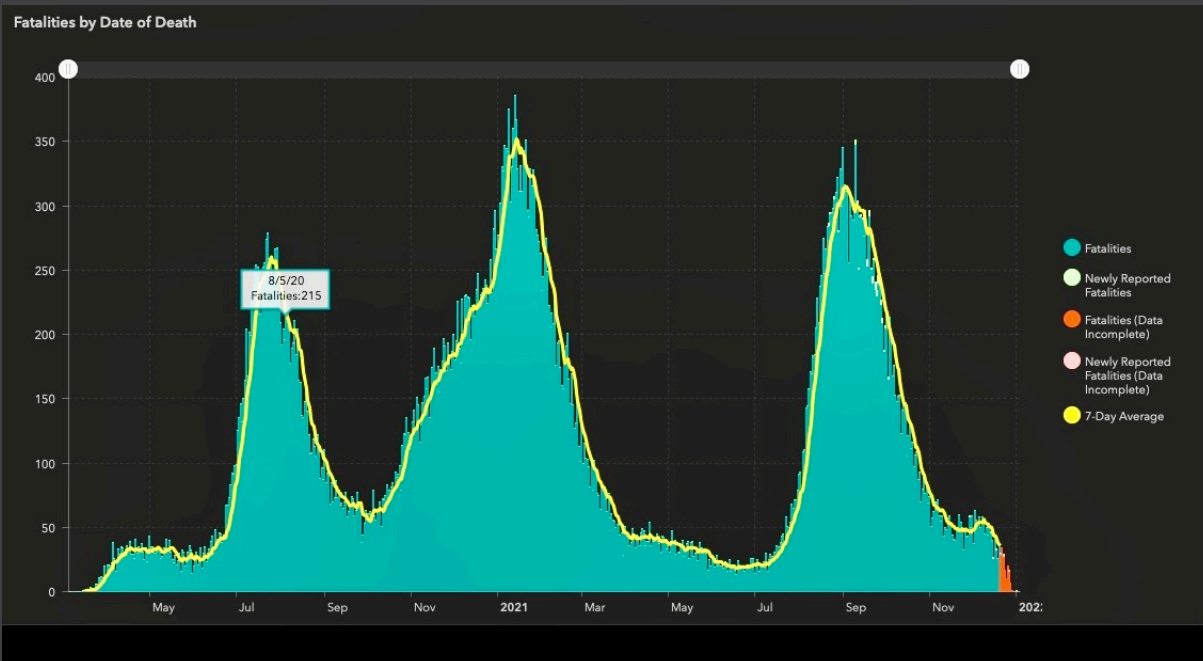
Harris County's Current positivity rate is 25.9% over the last 14 day period. The latest increase, likely due to the Omicron Variant. At present, over 66.5% of Harris County's population have been vaccinated with at least one dose. 57% are now fully vaccinated. Almost 81% of people older than 12 years of age have received at least some vaccination and those older than 65 make up the largest vaccination percentage group.

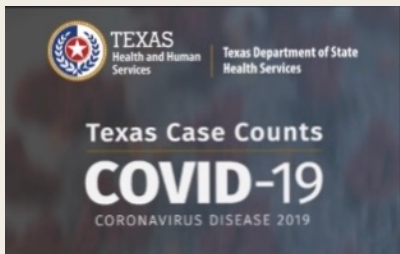
(Source - [New York Times](#))

## Statewide New COVID Cases



## 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](#)

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>

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## **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 Omicron Variant is working its way through our community as well as our schools. The percentage of Texas students with Covid is 4.3% out of the over 5 million enrolled students. Those cases have increased in the past few weeks with the variant, 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**





## Herb Alpert & Lani Hall

8:00 p.m., Saturday, January 29, 2022

[Website & Tickets](#)

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. Still on the schedule for the remainder of the season schedule:

- 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

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### 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).

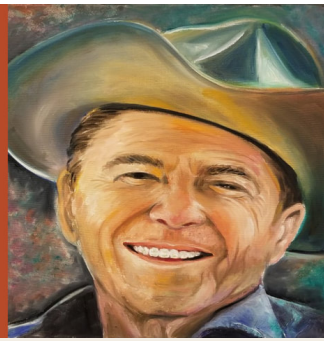
- Voices from the Past presents "Rhythm King" – 11 a.m., Saturday, February 12, 2022
- Houston Grand Opera's Opera to Go! presents "The Barber of Seville in Texas" (Bilingual) – 11 a.m., Saturday, April 23, 2022
- 

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  
Until 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

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](#)

## **Lawsuits on Commissioner Redistricting**

Retired Commissioner Steve Radack has filed a new lawsuit against Harris County Commissioner's Court alleging that insufficient public notice was given on the redistricting map chosen. Such an action would be a violation of the Open Meetings Act.

On December 22nd, a Harris County Judge tossed a previous lawsuit from Republican Commissioners and voters over new county maps that favor Democrats. Judge Dedra Davis ruled in favor of Harris County, finding that Republican commissioners Jack Cagle and Tom Ramsey and three voters did not have jurisdiction to sue over the redistricting plan.



### **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**

**CY-FAIR HOUSTON**  
*Chamber of Commerce*

**The committee meets the 1st Thursday  
of each month to discuss governmental  
issues that confront their Cy-Fair area.**

**Cy-Fair Chamber Website**

**They meet at the Chamber offices  
located at 8711 Highway 6 North, Ste.  
120 Houston, TX 77095.**

### **Harris County Pct 4 Public Safety Forum**

Meets at:  
Glorious Way Church  
11611 Champions Forest Dr  
Houston, TX 77066

Local representatives from criminal justice and government agencies make presentations and discuss issues important to the community.

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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