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# NORTHEAST NEWS

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VOL. 44, NO. 12 TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020 HOUSTON, TEXAS www.nenewsroom.com

**2 Virus test sites now open**



- United Memorial Med Ctr. private site at 510 w. Tidwell, as seen above is free, and does not require pre-screening.
- City of Houston, at Butler Stadium, call 832-393-4220 for pre-screening. Also free. At both sites, only those with symptoms will be tested.

**NEWS NOTES**

**COVID-19 Executive Orders**

On March 19, 2020, Governor Abbott announced several executive orders in response to COVID-19. These orders got into effect on March 20, 2020 and will end at midnight on April 3rd. They include the following regulations:

- Every person in Texas is to avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people.
- No dining in at restaurants, bars, or food courts. Take out, drive-thru and delivery options will be allowed.
- Gyms are to remain closed.
- Schools are to remain closed, but online or alternative learning options may be used.
- No visitations at nursing homes, retirement centers, or long-term care facilities unless it is to provide critical care assistance.

THIS IS NOT A SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER. You can still go to grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, parks, and banks. Essential government services and critical infrastructure still operational, and domestic travel allowed.

**Surviving the Coronavirus**

To the Editor,  
School closings, sports event cancellations, food hoarding... We live in a new Coronavirus-induced world. Yet some personal health facts remain unchanged.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer good advice for preventing community spread and personal infection: apply social distancing, sanitize surfaces, wash your hands, don't touch your face. But, there's more...

Does anyone wonder why uncounted numbers of

See *Surviving*, Page 8

**COVID-19 drive thru testing available at no charge**

HOUSTON, TX – Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Chair of the Congressional Coronavirus Task Force, hosted a press conference to urge residents with symptoms of the coronavirus to take advantage of no charge testing. The President just

signed the Congressional bill that provides for no charge testing and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee announces drive thru testing at no charge at United Memorial Medical Center located at 510 West Tidwell, Houston, TX 77091.

No charge to the persons being tested. Testing periods are:

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM.

Testing is limited to those persons with symptoms. Drive to the Test Site for screening and the test swab.

**Federal relief available for businesses and other tax filers impacted by COVID-19**

**Coronavirus Emergency Aid Package Signed**

The legislation signed last Wednesday evening provides paid sick and family leave for some for U.S. workers impacted by the illness, expands unemployment assistance, includes nutrition assistance and increases resources for testing. Efforts are already underway to put together a third, larger relief mea-

sure that could total \$1 trillion.

**Deadline for Tax Filing extended to July 15th**

Following President Donald J. Trump's emergency declaration pursuant to the Stafford Act, the U.S. Treasury Department and IRS issued guidance allowing all individual and other non-corporate tax filers to defer up to \$1 million of federal income tax

(including self-employment tax) payments due on April 15, 2020, until July 15, 2020, without penalties or interest.

**SBA to Provide Disaster Assistance Loans for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is of-

See *RELIEF*, page 8

**Coronavirus Task Force Implemented by Aldine ISD**

The Aldine Independent School District Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney is taking proactive measures against the coronavirus/COVID-19 to minimize risk to students, employees, and families relating to the spread of the coronavirus.

There are increasing cases of coronavirus confirmed in Harris and surrounding counties. The school district confirmed that these cases do not include students or employees of the school system.

"However, considering the virus is now confirmed in our county, we are taking additional steps to minimize risk to our students and staff," Goffney said. "Our school district is following the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) guidance for schools. This includes making sure that our emergency operation plans are reviewed and up-

to-date and that there is routine environmental cleaning. AISD uses cleaning products that have been verified by the manufacturer to kill viruses. Out of an abundance of caution, we are developing a plan to limit 'non-essential' school activities and travel to lessen the risk of exposure. We have set a date to reopen schools after the Easter/spring holiday in April, but we are evaluating the situation daily.

"Our district is collaboratively working with state, county, and city public health officials to keep our schools, students, and staff safe. The steps we are taking are only part of many ongoing actions the district will take to proactively combat the spread of the coronavirus." The district announced this week the formation of a cross-functional Execu-

tive Task Force of senior district leaders to monitor and oversee the district's ongoing response to the coronavirus.

The task force will provide guidance on teaching and learning, state assessment, human capital, CDC health updates, UIL, financial services, technology services, operations, and community engagement.

The school district remains in close communication with public health officials to make informed operational decisions.

"We are committed to keeping students, employees, and families safe and informed with the most current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," Goffney stressed.

The district will continue to update information on its Health Alerts web page.

**CHARLOTTE'S WEB**



**Learning to Live Differently**

As I awoke at 2 a.m., I began to replay conversations from the past few days. Perhaps for the first time in years, I was wishing I did not live alone. If things go the way many are speculating, it might be weeks or even months until we get the next hugs.

Hugs have always been an important part of my life, at least during my adult life. When attending the University of Texas in Austin, I took my first of many psychology classes and learned

that research has shown that if you get or give at least three hugs a day, your mental state is most often "happier" and that you will learn to have many more days filled with opportunities to share optimism than if you stay to yourself.

I have often joked that when I get to Heaven, that St. Peter will have to go enjoy something new, as I was going to take his place at the pearly gates

See *Living Differently*, Page 7

**Yuroba Harris receives St. Hope Award**

By Allan Jamail

At the St. Hope Award Ceremony Honoree Yuroba Harris, District Director for Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia received the COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD.

The award stated, "Presented to Yuroba Harris' in honor of her exemplary efforts to advance community health leading to life impacting outcomes for many disproportionately affected members of our Community."

St. Hope Foundation Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) community health care organization that was established in November 1999. St. Hope was created in response to the growing need for innovative, effective health care solutions designed to reduce health disparities within Houston and rural counties.

St. Hope has five Houston area locations, for more information visit: <https://www.sthopefoundation.com>



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# SCHOOL / COMMUNITY NEWS

## Coronavirus vs. Influenza: The differences and what we need to know

As physicians, other medical experts, and the public learn more about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, scientists are learning more about the similarities – and differences – between COVID-19 and influenza. Both viruses cause respiratory disease, yet the World Health Organization (WHO) reports there are important differences between the two and how they spread.

First, COVID-19 and influenza viruses have similar disease symptoms and a wide range of illness from mild to severe disease, and even death. Second, both viruses are transmitted by contact, droplets (from sneezes and coughs, for example), and contact with surfaces that can carry the infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture. As a result, common public health measures, such as cleaning high-contact surfaces such as door handles and handrails, washing hands, and coughing into your elbow or a tissue (and immediately disposing of the tissue), are important actions to prevent transmitting the disease to others. Doctors also recommend staying home if you are sick.

While the symptoms appear the same, there is a big difference between patients suffering a severe case of COVID-19 and influenza. The flu has a shorter incubation period from infection to diagnosable symptoms and can take 3 days to spread from person to person. The flu spreads faster than COVID-19, which can take 5 to 6 days to spread person to person. Also, flu can be transmitted before someone has symptoms, a major factor in the spread of influenza. As a result, children, pregnant women, elderly people, patients with chronic medical conditions, and those with compromised immune systems are most at risk to catch the flu.

The WHO reports a COVID-19 carrier can shed the virus 24 to 48 hours prior to symptom onset, reducing the threat of transmission to other people. Pre-symptomatic transmission of the flu is 3 to 5 days. However, when COVID-19 symptoms appear, the range of illness severity is proportionately different than the flu. WHO data suggests that 80% of COVID-19 infections are mild or asymptomatic, but 15% are severe infections requiring oxygen

and 5% are critical infections requiring intensive care.

So, who is most at risk? Medical experts say people who are elderly, especially those with preexisting conditions, have an increased risk of getting sick from COVID-19. So far, the WHO says children, from newborn to age 19, are less likely to catch COVID-19. Additional studies in China also suggest that children who do catch COVID-19 are more likely to catch it from adults, rather than vice-versa. However, children play a major role in the spread of the flu.

Scientists are currently developing more than 20 COVID-19 vaccines, but there are currently no licensed vaccines or therapeutics available. In contrast, antivirals and vaccines are widely available for influenza. While the influenza vaccine is not effective against COVID-19 virus, it is highly recommended to get vaccinated each year to prevent the flu.

To help Texas physicians defend Texans against COVID-19, TMA has established – and continuously updates – an online Coronavirus Resource Center. Visit [textmed.org/Coronavirus](http://textmed.org/Coronavirus).

## Lone Star College cancels graduation ceremonies

HOUSTON (March 19, 2020) – Lone Star College has announced its plan to cancel all spring 2020 graduation ceremonies, which were scheduled to take place May 6-9.

“This was not an easy decision to make,” said Stephen C. Head, Ph.D., LSC chancellor. “I know what a special time this is for our students, but given the circumstances, we felt

it prudent to err on the side of caution.

“We are working on alternative arrangements to help commemorate and celebrate students’ remarkable achievement of graduating and moving on to the next chapter in their life,” said Head.

LSC awards diplomas to students who complete their degree/certificate requirements at the end of

each semester.

Currently all LSC facilities are closed to students until April 13. LSC Online classes that started before spring break will resume March 23.

Discussions are also ongoing as to which classes will be moved online and which will remain face to face and that information will be shared with students by April 10.

## Resolution to continue to pay employees approved by Aldine ISD Trustees

In an emergency meeting on Thursday, March 19, the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees unanimously approved a resolution to continue compensating employees while the district is closed due to the Coronavirus.

The resolution effects exempt, non-exempt and long-term substitutes who have not been able to return to their jobs since the district was shut down on March 16.

“We believe this is the right and prudent thing to do to ensure that our em-

ployees will continue to be paid during this pandemic,” said Board President Paul Shanklin. “Our employees had no control over the district being shut down and we do not want them to suffer financially while we wait to re-open the district. We as a Board are proud of the action we took today.”

The resolution also stated that employees should stand ready to work during this period and report to duty when instructed by their supervisor.

During the closure, a

non-exempt employee who is required to report to duty by their supervisor will receive premium pay under board policy DEA. Identified exempt employees who have been required to report to duty will receive a stipend in an amount that will be determined by Superintendent Dr. LaTonya M. Goffney.

The district will have limited essential personnel report to duty to restore district operations and support Aldine ISD students.

## HOUSTON SYMPHONY EXTENDS PERFORMANCE CANCELATIONS

HOUSTON (March 16, 2020) – In response to recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, the Houston Symphony announced that it is extending its concert cancellations, canceling all remaining concerts and community activities through May 10, 2020 in order to protect the health of audiences, orchestra and chorus members, and staff.

“The CDC is recommending a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people for the next eight weeks,” explained Executive Director, CEO, and holder of the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair John Mangum. “We want to do everything we can to protect our audiences, musicians and chorus, and staff, so we’ve made the difficult decision to move forward with these cancellations. We are working to reschedule upcoming concerts and programs whenever possible during the summer and in future seasons.”

The concerts affected by the cancellations are:

- Swing to Rock with Dave Bennett, March 20, 21, and 22, 2020
- Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20, March 26, 28, and 29, 2020
- Chamber Music Series Concert with Cedric Tiberghien, March 27, 2020
- Andrés Conducts Mahler 7, April 3, 4, and 5, 2020
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, April 10 and 11, 2020
- Aretha: Queen of Soul, April 17, 18, and 19, 2020
- Heroes and Adventures (Family Concert), April 18, 2020
- Symphonie fantastique, May 1, 2, and 3, 2020
- The Music Critic with John Malkovich, May 7, 2020
- The Music of Whitney Houston, May 9 and 10, 2020

The Houston Symphony is a key contributor to Houston’s nonprofit arts and cultural community, which is a vital part of Houston’s economy. The unexpected loss of event-

dependent revenue and related decline in charitable contributions is still being felt in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey just three years ago, and is expected to grow as a result of this health crisis. The Houston Symphony is currently reaching out to ticket-holders for the canceled concerts via email, phone, web, and social media to ask that they:

- donate the cost of the tickets to the Symphony. The Symphony will provide a donation form for the ticket value for tax purposes.
- exchange their ticket(s) for another scheduled performance in 2020 or for a voucher for the value of their purchase, allowing the ticket-holder more time to decide on another performance later on, or
- The Symphony’s Patron Services Center is available by phone to answer any questions or help with exchanges at 713.224.7575 during operating hours: Monday-Saturday, 12 noon-6 p.m.

## District provides tips to families to help children cope with Coronavirus anxiety, stress

If you’re noticing anxiety in your children these days, you’re not alone. With the mention of COVID-19 (commonly known as coronavirus) filling radio and television news, social media feeds, and our email inboxes, it’s no wonder many are feeling anxious. Between the uncertainty and the real health risks, fear and anxiety are feelings that are both valid and common. The Social-Emotional Learning Department has provided families with a few ideas for managing those feelings. Families can find the tips at the At-Home School site and the Health Alerts page.

Dealing with the uncertainty of the current situation is difficult for everyone. Aldine ISD wants to support in any way it can to support the emotional and social needs of our students and families.

Strategies to Help Children Cope With Stress

- Create and maintain routines. Schedule activities such as schoolwork, physical movement, crafts, and housework throughout the day.
- Be mindful of what

children are being exposed to through the internet, television, and personal conversations with others. Too much news coverage feeds anxiety and fear in children. It is recommended that children limit their television viewing, and instead encourage them to play games (e.g., board games), draw, journal, and read books.

- Provide support by being present, remaining calm, and assuring them. Let children know it is okay to be nervous, and that you are there to care for and support them.

- Give children factual, age-appropriate information about the potential risks and appropriate preventive measures that are being undertaken.

- Reassure your children that both school and government officials are working carefully to ensure that everyone stays safe.

Below are links to other resources you may find helpful as you navigate this challenging time.

- How Teachers Are Talking to Students About the Coronavirus (Schwartz, S., EdWeek, 3/3/20)

- How to Talk to Children About the Coronavirus (Sperling, J., Harvard Health Publishing, 3/7/20)

- SEL Resources for Parents, Educators & School Communities Related to COVID-19 (Wolf, N., InsideSEL, 3/12/20)

- Preparing for Infectious Disease Epidemics: Brief Tips for School Mental Health Professionals (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020)

- Teaching Remotely for Grades K-12 | Free Resources and Strategies (Scholastic, 2020)

- Making the Most of “Going Virtual” in Response to COVID-19 (Diaz-Torres, C., Vranek, J., Kothari, N., Nakamura, R., Education First, 3/13/20)

- So They’ve Closed the Schools-Now What? (Corrow, C., Center for Collaborative Education, 3/16/20)

- How to Keep the Greater Good in Mind During the Coronavirus Outbreak (Suttie, J., Greater Good Magazine, 3/10/20)

Please feel free to reach out to Dr. Lorenzo Moore if you have questions or seek additional guidance in this area.

## Pct.One announces facility closures and program cancellations

Houston, TX - Following the recommendations of the Harris County Public Health Department, the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Harris County and the City of Houston, Harris County Precinct One has announced the closure of facilities and the cancellation of activities to protect residents and prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The following facilities and programs are closed

until March 31:

- All Precinct One Community Centers
- Organized youth sports at Precinct One sports fields
- Harris County Aquatics Program
- Youth After-School Programs
- All Senior Programs
- Precinct One Transportation Services

Harris County Precinct One parks will remain open and continue operation on their regular sched-

ule.

Residents with questions about other activities are encouraged to call 713-991-7881 for the latest information.

Additionally, residents are encouraged to follow ReadyHarris and Harris County Public Health online and on social media for additional information on community closures and other vital health information related to the COVID-19 virus.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL

Governor Abbott waives STAAR testing requirements

Is Requesting Suspension Of Federal Testing Requirements For 2019-2020 School Year

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott announced that he has waived the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, Governor Abbott is requesting that the Department of Education (DOE) waive federal testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.

Governor Abbott is working closely with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure that schools continue to deliver instruction to students while students are absent or while schools are closed due to COVID-19. This in-

cludes tailoring instruction for students with special needs so that they have access to the same education as other students in the district. Governor Abbott will continue to work with the TEA on developing additional methods to ensure that students are learning and ready to succeed at the next grade-level. These discussions are ongoing and more information will be provided as it develops.

"Your health and safety are top priorities, and the state of Texas will give school districts flexibility to protect and ensure the health of students, faculty, and their families," said Governor Abbott. "We will empower schools to make the best decisions to protect their communities from COVID-19."

The move to waive testing requirements reflects the Governor's emphasis on public health over all other priorities at this time. In normal times, Texas' assessment system provides educators and parents with reliable information on whether or not their students have mastered grade-level content. The Governor remains committed to ensuring parents, students, and school districts have access to this information in future years.

Superintendents should continue to prioritize the health and safety of students, faculty, and their families. Their leadership is an important part of our statewide efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and protect public health.

Governor Abbott waives certain vehicle registration, titling, and parking placard regulations in Texas

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott has announced that Texas is waiving certain rules relating to vehicle registration, parking placards for persons with disabilities, and titling to aid the state's efforts to combat COVID-19. These suspensions will allow Texans to avoid penalties for failure to timely title or register a vehicle, or renew a parking placard. The waivers fall within the actions the Governor is taking under the State of Disaster he declared last week, and are part of Texas' efforts to reduce in-person contact among Texans and slow the spread of COVID-19.

"The State of Texas con-

tinues to implement a comprehensive plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and that includes strategies to reduce preventable in-person contact," said Governor Abbott. "By suspending these rules, Texans can avoid unnecessary crowds and in-person contact without fear of being penalized. We encourage all Texans to continue practicing social distancing and to take preventative actions to protect their health and the health of those around them."

The Governor will work with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to ensure law enforcement officers throughout the

state are aware of these waivers. The Department of Motor Vehicles will also continue to provide registration renewal services online at [renew.txdmv.gov](http://renew.txdmv.gov). For additional information, Texans should contact the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles at (888) 368-4689.

The following regulations and rules are suspended under the Governor's Disaster Declaration:

- Registration and Title Requirements
- Renewal of Persons with Disabilities Parking Placards
- 30-Day Temporary Registration Permits

Governor Abbott activates National Guard in response to COVID-19

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today activated the Texas National Guard to be prepared to assist with response efforts for COVID-19. This preparative measure will ensure that the Texas National Guard can assist in various forms throughout the state when needed. Healthcare workers and first responders who are

members of the Texas National Guard are excluded from this activation so that they can continue serving the people of Texas in their respective fields.

"By activating the Texas National Guard, we are ensuring Texas is prepared as we continue to mitigate the spread of COVID-19," said Governor Abbott. "I am grateful to the men and

women of the National Guard for their dedication to serving their fellow Texans, and want to assure the public that this is a precautionary measure to make sure the Texas National Guard has the capability to serve at a moment's notice where they are needed most."

Governor Abbott, DPS waive expiration dates for driver licenses

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott announced that he has directed the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to temporarily waive expiration dates for Driver Licenses, Commercial Driver Licenses, and other identification forms. This action falls within the Governor's State of Disaster Declaration and is part of the ongoing effort to re-

duce to spread of COVID-19.

"Our top priority remains public health and safety, and we will continue to take action to ensure that Texans can avoid large public gatherings," said Governor Abbott. "Texas is at a pivotal moment in the response to COVID-19, and by tempo-

rarily delaying Driver License renewals we will help limit non-essential trips into public settings and slow the spread of this virus."

This suspension will be in effect until 60 days after the DPS provides further public notice that normal Driver License operations have resumed.

METRO expands public safety efforts, adjusts some service, encourages social distancing on system

METRO is continuing to expand its public service efforts to protect against the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. Later this week, the Authority will begin adjusting some services to encourage responsible social distancing on its local bus routes, light rail and Park & Rides.

During morning and evening rush hours, more buses will now be put in service on heavily traveled local routes in order to lessen crowding. To that end, seating will be reduced by approximately 50 percent to allow more space between passengers. As buses fill, operators will turn on the electronic destination signs advising patrons waiting at stops to "please take the next bus."

Those utilizing METRO Rail, Park & Rides and METRO Lift should also expect reduced capacity to mitigate close contact among riders.

These additional safety measures may result in delays on certain routes and riders should plan accordingly, including adjusting travel schedules. Also, METRO's TRIP app and Next Bus Arrival Texting may not be accurate. Customers should stay informed by subscribing to real-time, route information through METRO's service alert system and monitoring the agency's



METRO recommends social distance while using its service.

social media accounts, Twitter, Facebook. Customer service can be reached at 713-635-4000.

For those who are symptom-free and not part of a high-risk group, these are additional safeguards to consider when using public transportation:

- Consider commuting during off-peak hours
- Where available, take a seat instead of holding onto poles and handles
- When you get to your destination, wash hands or use sanitizer
- The Authority is also:
  - Putting an even greater emphasis on disinfecting surfaces frequently touched by the public during our daily bus and rail cleaning
  - Displaying posters

along the system reminding riders of public health officials' recommendations to stop the spread of germs

- Communicating safety messages on service alerts

- Remaining in close and continuous communication with local public health and emergency management officials to monitor developments
- While METRO uses an antibacterial disinfectant to clean vehicles and facilities, self care is still the best protection. It is important that the public relies on credible sources for information and follows the guidance of health officials who encourage:
  - Proper hygiene
  - Frequent hand washing
  - Stay home if you're sick

Harris County Jail suspends inmate visitation to prevent Coronavirus outbreak

Last week, Harris County was placed under a public health disaster declaration due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. To prevent the potential spread, the visitation to Harris County Jail will be suspended until further notice. The measures are being put into effect to protect our staff and inmates.

The suspension will be effective, Saturday, March 14, 2020.

Attorney-client interviews and other essential visits will not be affected. In order to assure family and friends are being able to communicate with their loved ones, a free calling program will be implemented for our facilities.

Securus will offer each inmate two free calls per week for the next 30 days.

- The phone platform would re-set each week.
- The calls will be the same standard length that inmates have now.
- To set up an account with Securus you need to know the inmate's SPN number, you can also visit [www.harriscounty so.org/JailInfo/inmate\\_info\\_inmate\\_visitation.aspx](http://www.harriscountyso.org/JailInfo/inmate_info_inmate_visitation.aspx) or call Securus at 1-800-844-6591.

Inmates housed at the Joint Processing Center (JPC) will have the option to do video visitations - this service is only available for inmates housed at the JPC.

The public can do it from home using a home computer and a webcam, from Monday thru Friday from 4 p.m. until 9 p.m. and Saturdays and Sun-

days from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. To obtain more information about the off-site video visitation please visit [www.harriscountyso.org/JailInfo/inmate\\_info\\_inmate\\_visitation.aspx](http://www.harriscountyso.org/JailInfo/inmate_info_inmate_visitation.aspx).

The Harris County jail system has experienced epidemics in the past and that experience has prepared the jail. "We are screening all new inmates in the booking process at the JPC, which counts with a full clinic. The jail has COVID-19 test kits to screen inmates in-house. We have also set aside four quarantine tanks," said Sheriff Ed Gonzalez. "We apologize for the inconvenience this may cause, but the health of our staff, inmates and community is our priority."

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## OPINION PAGE



## Social Security Matters

by AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Russell Gloor  
Association of Mature American Citizens

### Ask Rusty – Using IRA instead of Claiming SS; Disability Appeal

**Dear Rusty:** I am currently unemployed and drawing funds from my IRA. I am 62 years old. My financial adviser instructed me to not take Social Security because once I do that the percentage of increase would stop. He said to wait until the benefits increased to the point where I could then take Social Security and leave my IRA alone. Does that seem right? Also, I have applied for SS Disability benefits and have been rejected, but I am currently appealing that decision. Is my next step a lawyer? If so do you have any recommendations? Signed: Befuddled

**Dear Befuddled:** If you take your Social Security (SS) benefits at age 62, your payment will be cut by about 27.5% from what it would be at your full retirement age of 66. If you wait, your SS payment when you claim it will have grown for each month you delay. You only get 100% of the SS benefit you have earned from a lifetime of working when you reach your full retirement age (FRA). The rate of benefit growth before you reach your FRA is a bit more than 6% for each year you wait, so I expect that your financial advisor compared that guaranteed growth to the interest you are receiving on your IRA and concluded that waiting to claim a higher SS benefit for the rest of your life is a better deal. Provided you are in good health, that seems like a prudent suggestion. And just so you are aware, if you delay claiming SS beyond your FRA, you'll earn an additional 8% for each year you further delay, up to age 70 when your SS benefit would be about 75% more than it will be if you take it now.

Regarding your disability appeal, I cannot recommend a specific attorney, but I suggest

you seek one who specializes in Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims. SSDI attorneys must adhere to Federal law and they are limited in what they can charge you. Usually that limit is 25% of whatever back SSDI benefits they can secure for you (paid from those back benefits) to a maximum of \$6000. There should be no charge for an initial consultation, and you shouldn't be required to pay anything unless they win your case for you. The easiest way to find someone to assist you is to do a search for "SSDI attorneys near me" and then do some initial research on your search results before selecting. You'll be able to judge the strength of your SSDI appeal by whether the SSDI attorney accepts your case – they'll only accept your case if they believe they can win and be compensated for their efforts. Only you can judge if engaging an attorney is a wise idea at this point. You still have multiple SSDI appeal levels available to you, and an SSDI attorney can be engaged at any point you choose.

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### CAPITAL TALK

By U. S. Congresswoman  
Sylvia Garcia



**Dear Editor,**  
Starting March 16th, my office will begin serving constituents remotely and our physical office locations will be temporarily closed to visitors in an effort to protect the public health and prevent the further spread of coronavirus in our community.

The members of my team will be working remotely during normal business hours. The office is implementing continuity of operations procedures (COOP) to ensure constituent services are not interrupted during this time.

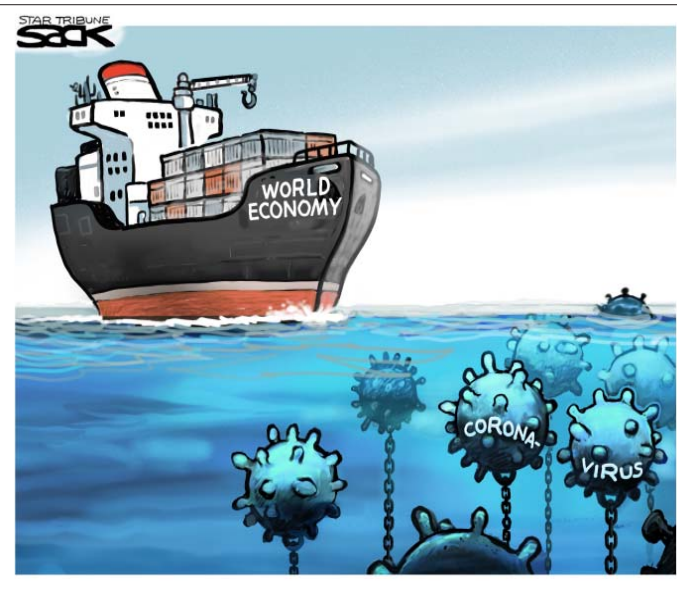
Constituent correspondence is always welcome. However, to ensure a prompt reply, I recommend for you to use email or phone in place of physical mail whenever possible. If you call, please leave a message to ensure a timely response. Constituent services representatives will continue to work diligently on behalf of the residents of the Texas

29th Congressional District.  
My team is here to work on existing and new casework issues involving the federal government - including navigating travel restrictions announced by the President and newly enacted legislation to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak. Most scheduled meetings will now take place over the phone or web conference.

This announcement applies to my offices in Washington, DC and Houston, TX. Please call our office at 832-325-3150 or email via our website at [sylviagarcia.gov](mailto:sylviagarcia.gov)/ contact if my team or I can be of assistance.

For additional information, make sure to follow me @RepSylviaGarcia on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for regular updates about coronavirus and other issues important to our community.

Sincerely,  
Senator Sylvia Garcia



## Governor issues statewide disaster declaration

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott on March 13 declared a state of disaster in all Texas counties and listed actions agencies are taking to contain and minimize the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, a contagious flu-like respiratory disease.

Abbott said agency actions would include:

—Provide immediate ability to move resources around the state, including resources obtained through the Strategic National Stockpile, an emergency supply of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies;

—Restrict visitations at nursing homes, state-supported living centers, hospitals, daycare facilities, prisons, jails and juvenile justice facilities, while allowing limited exceptions for situations such as end-of-life visitations;

—Direct state agencies to take any action necessary to facilitate telemedicine and to provide flexible work and tele-work policies; and

—Empower the Texas Attorney General to pursue cases of price-gouging and ensure that offenders are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

### Cost waiving requested

Earlier last week, Abbott and the Texas Department of Insurance asked health insurers and health maintenance organizations operating in Texas to waive costs associated with the testing and telemedicine visits for the diagnosis of COVID-19.

Additionally, TDI requested that insurers report their actions related to consumer cost-sharing and access to services so that the department can ensure consumers are aware of their available benefits.

"Consulting a physician from home is a practical way to avoid getting sick,

### STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling

prevent the spread of the virus and help ensure that emergency rooms are available for those who truly need them. We appreciate the collaboration of health insurers operating in Texas to enhance our state's proactive approach to addressing any potential outbreaks of COVID-19," Abbott said.

### Hegar: Economy is strong

Texas faces current weaknesses in financial, commodity and energy markets but the fundamentals of the Lone Star State's economy remain strong, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar said on March 9.

Texas has exposure if oil prices remain depressed for a sustained period of time, and slowdowns in economic activity related to the COVID-19 outbreak could also be a headwind, Hegar said. However, he added, it is now only six months into the state's current budget cycle, so it is too early to tell how current fluctuations might impact long-term economic performance and state revenues.

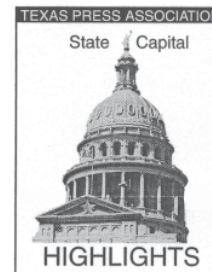
Hegar also pointed out that the Texas economy is less reliant on oil and gas severance taxes to fund the day-to-day functions of state government than it has been historically. Additionally, the state leadership has numerous financial management tools that allow the state to react to and contend with economic pressures.

"Having said that, we will continue to monitor the economy and state revenues closely and will provide updates to lawmakers and the public as conditions warrant," Hegar said.

### Revenue to be distributed

Comptroller Hegar on March 11 announced he would send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts \$766.2 million in local sales tax allocations for March.

The dollar amount is 7.7% more than in the amount distributed in March 2019.



The allocations are based on sales made in January by businesses that report tax monthly.

Details may be found online in the comptroller's monthly sales tax allocation comparison summary reports at [comptroller.texas.gov](http://comptroller.texas.gov).

### Agency conducts exercise

Comptroller Hegar on March 11 said his office conducted an agencywide telework exercise on March 10.

In the exercise, some 1,800 employees representing the majority of the comptroller's staff worked regular hours from home. Critical operations of the agency functioned normally, including call center agents who handled normal call volumes while teleworking.

"I want to stress that this was a scheduled business continuity exercise designed to simulate a scenario in which comptroller employees were required to work from home. This exercise will allow the agency to identify and address any weaknesses in our continuity plan under controlled conditions," Hegar said.

### Texas joins consortium

The Office of the Secretary of State on March 9 announced that Texas will become the 30th state to join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a non-profit consortium that assists member states in increasing voter participation and improving the accuracy of voter rolls.

Governed and managed by member states, ERIC was formed in 2012 with assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts. During its 2019 session, the 86th Texas Legislature appropriated \$1.5 million for Texas to join the consortium.

Participation in ERIC will assist Texas elections officials in identifying and conducting outreach to eligible but unregistered voters to encourage them to register to vote, according to the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

### THE POSTSCRIPT

By  
Carrie Classon

### "Smelling Like Dog"

It's a very gray day. Today is exactly the sort of day I am most grateful for dogs.

Walking in my neighborhood, everyone feels the need to share the latest dire news. Meeting in the street, we almost feel irresponsible if we don't express our concern and our dismay and our confusion. The people with dogs, however, have it easy.

Because dogs don't care. Nearly every day, I encounter dogs. There is Graham, the black lab, who is supposedly being trained as a service dog. Graham does not appear to have acquired a service mentality quite yet. He is far more interested in finding bits of disgusting animal remains and running around with bones in his mouth.

There is Teddy, an all-white malamute. He is terrified of my hiking poles and starts to make noises that sound like singing whenever I approach.

But lately, the dog I get the biggest kick out of is Snoopy, a sixty-pound plus Bernese Mountain Dog. Snoopy is only four months old. His owner, Monica, a slim woman with an Eastern European accent is trying to teach Snoopy manners. Snoopy might be learning—but he is not learning nearly as fast as he is growing.

I learned Snoopy's name the first time we met and now, when I see him coming in the distance, I holler, "Hey! Snoopy!" Snoopy stops dead in his tracks. He looks up. He recognizes me. Then he begins to run, his oversized front paws pounding the pavement in unison, dragging poor Monica behind him. (I always realize I shouldn't have done that the moment after I do.)

Poor Monica arrives breathless and Snoopy does all the things you'd expect a four-month-old puppy to do—but in a sixty-pound plus package. It is exhausting and exciting and totally delightful.

The bad news for Monica is that Snoopy will be 120 pounds before he's done growing and he will still be a puppy. Monica can train him every day for the next year, but he will still totally lose it at regular intervals. I pity Monica. And I envy her.

Because, when you are walking Snoopy, there's nothing else you can do. You can't worry too much about the economy or even the pandemic when you have sixty pounds of slobbering enthusiasm on your hands. No one is at a loss for words when they meet Monica and Snoopy. Everyone says, "Hey! Snoopy!" Because dogs don't care.

Dogs are living in this moment, excited about the person in front of them, smelling whatever is in the air at that moment. Worries about tomorrow don't exist for Snoopy.

I know I can't live like Snoopy. I know there is a lot more I have to think about—a lot more I am responsible for. But right now, more than ever, I wish I had a dog. Because, no matter what happens, a dog needs a walk. A dog needs to be talked to and petted and cared for. A dog keeps us tethered in the here and now and reminds us that we are living in this moment, and that every moment in the future is imaginary.

I reluctantly say goodbye to Snoopy and Monica. "You have friends, Snoopy!" Monica tells her giant puppy as they walk away. I try to remember what I was thinking about before I saw Snoopy, and the thought is gone. It will return, I am sure. But right now, I notice how deeply blue the sky is, how signs of green are starting to appear, and how my hands are smelling like dog.

Till next time,  
Carrie

Carrie Classon's memoir is called, "Blue Yarn." Learn more at [CarrieClasson.com](http://CarrieClasson.com).

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ENTERTAINMENT

We weren't sick at all last winter... ...but this year some of us caught the flu!

# Newspaper Fun!

www.readingclubfun.com Animills LLC © 2018 V15-8 Kids: color stuff in!

I feel achy, feverish and crabby. **Feel Sick? Get Well!**

Ooops, good thing I've got a tissue handy! I'll toss it into the wastebasket, and will wash my hands too. We thought this might be an allergy, but we checked with our doctor, who said I have a common cold. She sent medicine to help me feel better, and told me to rest and drink lots of fluids. Sometimes when I visit, the doctor lets me try that cool instrument she uses to listen to sounds in my body. **If you read the clues and fill in this puzzle with words about health care, you will find the name of the instrument under the arrow:**

Hey, I don't have anything to do with your chicken pox! **Read the clues to fill in the crossword puzzle with medical terms.**

If you don't feel well in class, ask to visit the school nurse.

**Clues:**

1. person trained to help doctors and take care of sick people
2. treatment of medical problem by using surgery
3. pill or liquid used to treat a disease or relieve pain
4. person licensed to treat diseases or injuries
5. medicine injected into the body with a needle
6. instrument used to take temperature
7. sleep, relax
8. ill, not healthy
9. common sickness: sneezing, runny nose, coughing
10. building where doctors, nurses take care of sick or hurt people
11. tiny living thing that can cause disease

**Words to use:** thermometer nurse germ cold hospital

**Doctor, What Have I Caught?**

Everyone feels sick from time to time. Thanks to shots and vaccines, doctors are able to help us avoid many diseases. Medicines may help us feel better too.

**Can you find and circle these illnesses and medical problems?**

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 A R F G E W A S X C U N M F Y L  
 R S T O M A C H A C H E J S H U  
 R O J F E S D T Y H G U G E S E  
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 L R J H P K J U D G R A K T O L  
 X O P N E K C I H C L U H A H R  
 S A U E R F G T H S E L S A E M  
 T T O O T J D E C Z Y L I U H J

pneumonia  
 sore throat  
 food poisoning  
 athlete's foot  
 ear infection  
 diarrhea  
 stomach ache  
 influenza  
 cold  
 mumps  
 rabies  
 polio  
 measles  
 chicken pox

Forest has a "little frog in his throat" that makes his voice sound froggy...er...funny. **Can you help him get to the chicken soup that may comfort him?**

**"Healthy" Expressions**

Have you ever heard someone say "I feel blue?" You know that they are not really colored "blue," but that they feel a bit sad. An expression that people use to mean something *different* from the actual words they say is called an "idiom" ('id ē əm). It is almost like a secret code. The English language can be hard to learn because it has a lot of idioms. **Match these 2 groups of "health" idioms to their meanings:**

**Group 1:**

1. sick as a dog
2. catch a cold
3. fit as a fiddle
4. under the weather
5. head is spinning

**Group 2:**

1. on the mend
2. in the pink of health
3. just what the doctor ordered
4. have a "frog" in one's throat
5. there's a bug going around

**Meanings:**

- A. someone in good shape
- B. not feeling 100% well
- C. very sick
- D. feeling of dizziness or confusion
- E. get sick with the common cold

**Match 2:**

- A. in perfect health
- B. getting better after an illness
- C. something keeps you from speaking clearly
- D. a cold or virus that everyone seems to have
- E. exactly what is needed

CHURCH PAGE

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced Remember those whose lives are at stake. May we who have no risk factors Remember those most vulnerable. May we who have the luxury of working from home Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent. May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips Remember those that have no place to go. May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market Remember those who have no margin at all. May we who settle in for a quarantine at home Remember those who have no home. During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace to our neighbors. \*Author Unknown

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LIFESTYLE

Living Differently,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and be the official greeter. And anyone who has been around me knows that greeting comes with a hug. Yet now, just days before my 58th birthday, I am being told that we cannot hug, we should not be in groups larger than 10 and that we should avoid any social activities. Can you imagine? For decades, I have been greeting at church services, Chamber luncheons, meetings and many public events. And now, I guess I can wave and smile to the few people I will be seeing.

Being a single mother who has lived alone the majority of the time since

my youngest entered the Army in 2011, my life has been blessed to be a part of many groups and organizations that work in the community. Everything from comforting a young mom in prison, to offering my cell phone to a homeless person to use has provided opportunities to hug them, to pray with them and to try to brighten their lives.

Suddenly, I find myself more thankful than ever to have a position where I can reach out to senior adults and check on them via the phone. So many of them have stories to

share and by the time you hang up, you cannot help but be thankful for the time you chatted with them. In these "different" days that we are living in, pick up your phone, look through your contacts and make a call or two. Brighten up the day of someone you have not talked to lately. Reach out to those parents who are "homeschooling" right now and see if you can assist in any way. Take the time to turn off all electronics and listen as you read a book. Start making that bucket list for your next vacation. Learn to enjoy the time with yourself.

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey—

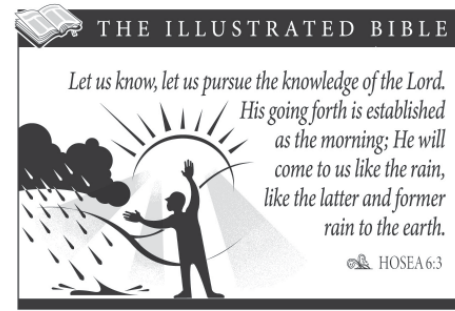
1. Is the book of Numbers in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. In Luke 11, what group of people did Jesus say took away the key of knowledge? Prophets, Carpenters, Lawyers, Scribes
3. Whose son, Mahershalal-hashbaz, is the longest human name in the Bible? Judas, Enoch, Isaiah, Abednego
4. The Ark of the Covenant was carried around and around what city? Ramah, Moroni, Jericho, Nicopolis
5. From John 13, who said to Jesus, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? Paul, Peter, Andrew, Thomas
6. Who was Jonah's father? Eli, Joppa, Tirtzah, Amittai

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Lawyers; 3) Isaiah; 4) Jericho; 5) Peter; 6) Amittai

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Toss it into the can. It's a neat idea.



# 5 things you can do to help us save lives

Dear friend,

Yesterday, we joined together with City of Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Fort Bend County Judge KP George, and public health officials from across the region to provide important regional community guidelines to help contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The guidelines are below.

Our goal is to make sure that we stay ahead of the spread of this virus as much as possible so that we slow the spread enough to allow our healthcare systems to keep up with an expected increase of patients. In the meantime, we are working locally to develop more access to testing, despite limitations at the state and federal levels.

Since the global outbreak began, we have been working in close coordination with regional jurisdictions to take proactive action to protect the health of our community by preparing for and responding to the spread of this virus. However, preventing the spread requires a strong partnership between government, the private sector, and individual residents like you. Below is a summary of the guidelines we are asking you to help us follow:

1. Immediately cancel or postpone events over 50 people.

We strongly urge the organizers of any events over 10 people to cancel or postpone such events.

2. Cancel all gatherings in which people will be in close contact.

Beyond large events, we are also strongly encouraging organizers of gatherings of any size in which people will be in close contact to cancel or postpone such events, if possible. If you cannot avoid bringing a group of people together, please make sure that anyone who is sick does not attend. Additionally, those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should not attend and organizers should increase the frequency of sanitizing common touchpoints.

3. Severely restrict access to senior living, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.

Older adults are at highest risk of dying from this virus. Senior living facilities, assisted living facilities, and other facilities with populations at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should limit interactions with the general public as much as possible. These facilities should implement social distancing measures, reduce large gatherings (e.g., group social events), and limit programs with external staff. Residents' exposure to the general community should be limited, and visits should be limited and restricted to residents' rooms. Attendees, staff, and visitors should be screened for temperature and respiratory symptoms. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned daily, and directors should implement short-term closures as needed.

4. If you're at higher risk, stay home.

People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. Those at higher risk include people 60 and older, people with underlying health conditions (e.g. heart disease, lung disease, diabetes), people who have weakened immune systems, and pregnant women. Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness should consult with their healthcare provider. Those without a healthcare provider should contact Harris Health's Ask A Nurse line at: 713-634-1110.

5. Manage a business? Urge your employees to work from home if possible.

Employers should take steps to make it feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people, and allow flexibility in sick leave benefits. Frequently touched areas in workplaces (doorknobs, tabletops, countertops, phones, keyboards, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, while protective ac-

tions should be taken to protect employees who are at higher risk of severe illness.

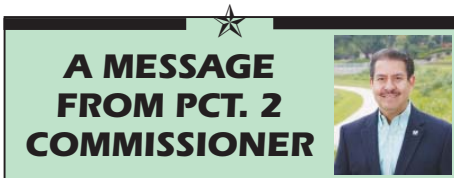
We respect and support individual school districts' decisions about closures or postponement of activities. It is important for schools to limit potential spread of COVID-19 because infected students may still come into contact with those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness outside the school setting. If schools do remain open, they should implement social distancing measures, reduce the frequency of large gatherings (e.g., assemblies), and limit the number of attendees per gathering. Additionally, we recommend that schools alter schedules to reduce mixing (e.g., stagger recess, entry/dismissal times), limit inter-school interactions, and consider distance learning and/or e-learning in some settings. Schools may also conduct regular health checks of students, staff, and visitors, if feasible.

For more detailed information, read Harris County Public Health's complete updated regional community guidelines here. These guidelines will remain in place until March 31, 2020 or until otherwise noted.

I also encourage all Harris County residents to visit the Ready Harris website for the latest information and to sign up to receive text updates, which are sent in real time to subscribers. Finally, if you or anyone without healthcare need access to coronavirus-related care, the County's Ask My Nurse hotline can help assess symptoms and refer you to appropriate care and testing if necessary. To reach a nurse, call 713-634-1110.

If I have learned anything as Harris County Judge, it is that ours is a strong, resilient community -- we will make it through this! In this time of uncertainty, let's be sure we take care of one another.

Abrazos,  
Lina Hidalgo



Dear Community

We hope you and families are safe during this difficult time. We are reaching out on behalf of Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia to humbly request your help. Commissioner Garcia has asked us to do everything we can to get critical and factual information to residents about COVID-19 (Coronavirus). We understand you are a trusted leader in your area and we ask you to please share the following message with your NextDoor page/Neighborhood message board/Facebook group/email distribution list.

If you are developing symptoms (dry cough, fever, body aches) that lead you to believe you have COVID-19 (Coronavirus), health care professionals don't want you to rush to doctors' offices, urgent cares, or emergency rooms, unless you are in a critical situation. Harris County Public Health has launched a telephone resource for residents of Harris County that may not have access to healthcare and are looking to visit a doctor due to coronavirus-related care. The call center, called "Ask My Nurse," will help patients assess

symptoms assessments and refer patients to appropriate level of care in a clinical setting. Experienced nurses are available to help you and answer your questions from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., 7 days a week. Nurses will be available to provide care in both English and Spanish. The number to call is 713-634-1110.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. It's vitally important that you share this information to the folks living in each and every neighborhood in Precinct 2 and across Harris County. I hope you are all managing your new normal with the kind of grace and goodness that you freely exhibit -- only from a distance!

I am here for you. Please feel free to reach out to me during this time.

Be well -- and stay that way!

Adrian Garcia,  
Pct. 2 Commissioner

Un mensaje de parte de Adrián García, Comisionado del Precinct 2 del Condado de Harris. Si usted tiene o está manifestando síntomas (tos seca, fiebre, dolores corporales) que están rel-

acionados al virus COVID-19 (también conocido como Coronavirus), los médicos profesionales del condado recomiendan que no vaya inmediatamente a las clínicas, hospitales o salas de emergencia del condado, a menos que esté en una situación crítica de salud.

La Oficina de Salud Pública del Condado de Harris ha lanzado un recurso telefónico para los residentes del condado que no tengan seguro médico y quieran visitar al médico debido a una razón relacionada con el Coronavirus. La línea de ayuda, llamada "Ask My Nurse," ayudará a los pacientes a hablar con una enfermera sobre sus síntomas y de esta manera referirlos al nivel necesario de ayuda que necesitan. Las enfermeras en la línea de ayuda estarán disponibles para su conveniencia de 9 am a 7 pm, los 7 días de la semana. La línea de ayuda estará disponible en inglés y en español. Para recibir ayuda, llame al número 713-634-1110.

Si le gustaría recibir avisos de parte de la Oficina del Comisionado Adrián García, puede inscribirse en el siguiente enlace: <https://www.hcp2.com/news/press-room>

## Harris County Tax Office eliminating services inside offices

Property Owners, Commercial Customers, Automobile Dealers/Title Services and Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrars Asked to Use Tax Office Drop boxes

Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar Ann Harris Bennett announces that Tax Office operations will continue during the COVID-19 pandemic by using drop box payment methods for property owners, Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrars, commercial customers, automobile dealers and title services beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

"All Harris County Tax Office locations will eliminate direct customer service transactions for the safety of our employees and the community," Bennett said. "The Tax Office is not closed. Employees will continue to provide services to those who usually visit a Tax Office location by accepting transactions by drop box or mail. Customers are also encouraged to use the Tax Office website to conduct all other business."

Property owners may make payments in person by using a Tax Office drop box located at the Harris County Administration Building at 1001 Preston Houston, TX 77002. Only checks, money orders or cashier's checks will be accepted. The drop box will be located in the first floor lobby. The property tax drop box will be available for use from 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Property owners can print their receipts online at [www.hctax.net](http://www.hctax.net).

Property owners can also pay their property taxes by mailing a check, money order or cashier's check to Ann Harris Bennett, Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar, P.O. Box 4622, Houston, TX 77210-4622. Payments can be made online by credit card at [www.hctax.net](http://www.hctax.net) or by free e-check by telephone at 713-274-CARD (2273).

Individuals making requests for Alcohol Permits, Tax Certificates and Coin-operated Machine permits must drop off their requests and payments

made by check, money order or cashier's check at the Harris County Tax Office Distribution Center at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 between 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. There will be no exceptions made for individuals arriving before or after the specified hours.

Property owners may request property tax payment plans by calling 713-274-8000, or by sending an email to [tax.office@hctx.net](mailto:tax.office@hctx.net). Additional information is available on the Tax Office website at [www.hctax.net](http://www.hctax.net).

Automobile dealers/title service companies and their representatives, and financial institutions may drop off their transactions at any open Tax Office branch or the Harris County Tax Office Distribution Center at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 during 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Only checks, money orders or cashier's checks will be accepted. Transactions will be limited to 30 per person. Completed transactions will be available for pick up from 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. There will be no exceptions made for individuals arriving before or after the specified hours.

All downtown commercial customers may drop off their completed paperwork at any open Tax Office branch or the Harris County Tax Office Distribution Center at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 between 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Only checks, money orders or cashier's checks will be accepted. Transactions will be limited to 30 per person. Completed transactions will be available for pick up from 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Again, there will be no exceptions made for individuals arriving before or after the specified hours.

Mechanic liens must be dropped off at the Harris County Tax Office Distribution Center at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 between 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. or sent by mail to Ann Harris Bennett, Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar, P.O. Box 4089, Suite 215, Houston, TX 77210.

Identification badge issuance for title services and their representatives has been canceled for March and April. New or renewal title service applications may be made by mail at: Office of Ann Harris Bennett, Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar, Attention: Special Investigations Unit, 1001 Preston St., Houston, TX 77002-1839. Applications may be dropped off with a check, money order or cashier's check at the Harris County Tax Office Distribution at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 during the hours of 8 a.m. - 9 a.m. There will be no exceptions made for individuals arriving before or after the specified hours.

Registered voters who need to update their voter registration information, or individuals who would like to register to vote should visit the Texas Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.texas.gov](http://www.sos.texas.gov).

All Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrars (VDVRs) should drop off their completed voter registration applications at the Harris County Tax Office Distribution Center at 11525 Todd Road, Houston, TX 77055 between 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Receipts will be available for pick up from 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. There will be no exceptions made for individuals arriving before or after the specified hours. The "five day" rule of turning in the voter registration applications will still apply with the exception of the applications due the next day after the voter registration cutoff date. VDVRs should call 713-274-8387, or send an email to [voters@hctx.net](mailto:voters@hctx.net) to request a drop off and pick up time for VDVR supplies at the Distribution Center.

The Kyle Chapman and Jim Fonteno Harris County Tax Offices are closed until further notice. The public is encouraged to follow the Harris County Tax Office on social media for updates and information on Tax Office closures and cancelled office events.

Have any questions? Please reach out to us at 713-274-8387 or [voters@hctx.net](mailto:voters@hctx.net)

## RELIEF,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fering designated states and territories low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you have a business that has been impacted by

the COVID-19 outbreak, there may be resources available to you through the Small Business Administration (SBA). Authorities encourage to visit the Texas Department of Emergency Management webpage to learn more and fill out an Economic Inju-

ry Worksheet.

For additional information, please contact the SBA disaster assistance customer service center. Call 1-800-659-2955 (TTY: 1-800-877-8339) or email [disastercustomer.service@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomer.service@sba.gov).

## Surviving,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

infected people develop no symptoms and only 20 percent of symptomatic people require hospitalization? It's because they have an effective immune system able to fight off the virus. But the CDC does not talk about that, perhaps for fear of offending powerful animal food industries.

Fortunately, good advice on boosting our immune sys-

tem is readily available on the internet from trusted sources like WebMD and Healthline. And the advice is always the same:

- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, including citrus fruits and leafy greens
- Refrain from dairy, other fatty animal products, and sugar-laden foods

- Maintain daily exercise of 30-60 minutes
- Minimize your stress level and get adequate sleep

Did I mention that this advice works great for all other nasty bugs as well?

Sincerely,  
Harry Sutter  
Houston, TX 77090

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