

PRESS RELEASE

JOE WEBER, FAYETTE COUNTY JUDGE

26 JUNE 2020

To the residents of Fayette County -- this morning Governor Greg Abbot issued his 28th Executive Order which directed some significant changes to his previous orders. The changes mostly relate to bars, restaurants, rafting and tubing businesses and outdoor gatherings of 100 people or more. The Governor's primary reason for issuing this order was the most recent increase in the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state. The rise in cases appears to be largely driven by certain types of activities which are specifically alluded to in his order. I will not go into the details of the Governor's order as it is extremely clear and available for all on numerous media sites throughout the state. I specifically recommend you go to gov.texas.gov to get the details of the order and to better understand its applicability to Fayette County.

In Fayette County, we as residents of the great state of Texas will comply with our Governor's order and I ask each and every one of you to continue to take the virus seriously. It remains, highly contagious, has proven to be extremely deadly to the most vulnerable, and remains a mystery in itself to most of us and many of our health experts. This virus will continue to spread until immunity is developed through infection itself or a vaccination. Neither appears to be occurring anytime soon. With that understanding, I continue to emphasize my three goals in combatting the virus in Fayette County have not changed: (1) Protect our most vulnerable, our elderly and particularly those with chronic or underlying medical conditions, (2) Protect our first responders by ensuring they have the proper training and protective equipment to avoid infection in the performance of their critical duties, and (3) Protect our local health care providers and their facilities by ensuring they too have the proper protocols, training and personal protective equipment in place to continue to meet the healthcare needs of our county residents. I continue to be encouraged by the data I receive daily and the conversations I have with residents and county staff that we as a county continue to be heading in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Our number of confirmed and active cases have continued to rise over the past several weeks, but this should be of no surprise with the phased re-opening of the state of Texas which started a month or so ago, and with the significantly increased numbers of county residents we have tested over the past several weeks.

Neither the Governor's most recent executive order nor the increase in active cases within our county should be taken as reasons to raise the level of panic and/or fear here in Fayette

County. The rising number of cases do continue to highlight the seriousness of the virus and should remind us that we are far from “out of the woods” in dealing with it. So let me conclude by providing some facts specifically relevant to the county in which we all reside:

- (1) Though the positivity rate of the state of Texas has increased above 10% over the past several weeks, our county positivity rate has only increased to just under 5%.
- (2) Even with an 800% increase in county testing over the past several weeks, our rate of rise has remained consistent and our positivity rate relatively unchanged, again below 5%.
- (3) Today we have 76 confirmed cases, that represents .29% of our county population. We have 46 active cases representing .17% of the population and .008% of people who have died, though any death of one of our county residents for any reason is painful to us all. I would ask you all to please look closely at where the decimal points are.
- (4) In the entire 21 county area of our Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Region 7, only 150 people have been hospitalized since the commencement of the virus disaster.
- (5) The total number of positives from testing of almost 800 people, both staff and residents in our nursing homes, has totaled 5 and they have been identified and properly quarantined. The complete testing of an independent living facility in our county yielded 0 positive results.
- (6) The most recent increase in confirmed cases within Region 7 has not been the elderly, but those within the age group of 20-59, the very population which exhibits the least severe symptoms, usually recovers at home versus in the hospital and returns to normal daily routine after treatment. (However, this group when infected remains an active carrier and must be even more careful to avoid spreading the disease). It’s also the group that has been predominantly involved in the reopening actions and activities.
- (7) Finally, our county office of Emergency Management and the office of the County Judge continue to work closely on a daily basis with local officials and leaders throughout our county and with Region 7 at DSHS, vetting and approving activities being planned within the county to ensure they are in compliance with checklists incorporated in the Governor’s guidelines for reopening Texas. I encourage all to refer to this online document if you have any questions regarding what the current guidelines are for both personal and public event driven activities within our county. (refer to open.texas.gov)

In concluding, I ask each of you to remain positive and be your own subject matter expert in caring for your health and safety and that of your loved ones during these very trying times. There will be no confusion as to what to do if you take charge of yourself and your loved ones by:

- Staying at home if you are not feeling well

- Avoiding large crowds or events if you are of a vulnerable age and particularly if you have underlying or chronic medical conditions
- Washing your hands as many times as you possibly can
- Sanitizing your hands and your surroundings as much as possible
- Strictly adhering to social distancing
- Wearing a mask if able, particularly if you find yourself in an environment or circumstance where you cannot maintain adequate social distancing.

If we all will do the above, we will get thru the COVID together. Throughout its history, Fayette County and its residents have endured extremely tough times and survived to become stronger and better. We will do the same again, for each and every one of us can legitimately say that 100% of the time, we've made it thru the worst days of our lives. We will continue to learn to live with this horrible disease and not die from it. There is a bright future out there for all of us. God Bless.

The Honorable Joe Weber

Fayette County Judge