



COMMISSIONER RODNEY EL
HARRIS COUNTY
PRECINCT ONE

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE

Dear Friends,

Every aspect of our lives has been impacted by Coronavirus (COVID-19). During the past several weeks, families have been challenged with great losses and made sacrifices. I wish that I could tell you that the worst has passed but that isn't the truth. Experts are predicting that COVID-19 cases in Harris County will peak around May 2 but I know we can get through this. **Throughout Harris County there are medical providers, public servants, grocery stores, delivery companies and volunteers working long days to meet our community's needs.**

Harris County Precinct One is no exception. **While we continue to keep Precinct One parks open and maintain roads and bridges that are essential to us, we are also working with nonprofits, safety**

net providers and public health professionals to find solutions to the fallout from this global pandemic. The health and safety of you and your family continue to be priority #1 for this office.



houston 
foodbank

Feeding families together

Houston

Food

Bank

Choosing to pay the rent or buy groceries for our families isn't a choice that any of us want to make. Due to job losses from COVID-19, the number of recent unemployment claims in Texas indicate that many of our neighbors are having to make those choices. **It is crucial for people to have access to food during this time.** While the Houston Food Bank (HFB) officials have significantly increased their food distribution -- doing 150% of regular operations -- to try and meet the growing needs of the community, their staffing and resources are limited. **That's why Precinct One and Harris County entered into an agreement with the Houston Food Bank to help continue its mission of providing food to low-income people and seniors**

in Harris County during the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

Precinct One and Harris County will help HFB provide approximately 440,000 pounds of food to Harris County residents each week during the public health disaster. HFB has hired temporary workers -- including laid-off restaurant and hospitality workers. The agency also will utilize Harris County employees to help ensure that food gets to people struggling to make ends meet during this tough time.

We need all the help we can get to assist our friends and neighbors in need.

Learn how you can receive food or volunteer at www.houstonfoodbank.org/covid19.

Compassionate Release

Based on the warnings from public health professionals, who stress that housing almost 8,000 people in a confined space poses an imminent threat for the entire community, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo signed an order to release from the county jail system up to 1,000 individuals accused of non-violent offenses, many may be too poor to afford bail. **In light of predictions that our community faces thousands of critically ill residents who will need hospitalization in coming weeks, Precinct One views Judge Hidalgo's order as a responsible action that will save lives.**

On Sunday, March 29 the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in the jail system. Since social distancing is not possible for those who are incarcerated, the potential for an outbreak inside the jail is high. **We've**

learned from the recent mistakes of other jail systems that did not heed the warnings of health officials. For instance, within one week, the Cook County jail jumped from two to 134 confirmed cases and at New York City's Rikers Island, at least 180 inmates and 141 staff members have tested positive, so far.

Not taking measures to prevent COVID-19 cases inside the jails by releasing those accused of non-violent offenses is poor public policy since an outbreak in the jail could fill more hospital beds than we have available and use limited resources, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators.

What is truly unfortunate is many of those being considered for release are already eligible but were too poor to post bail. People's lives shouldn't be put at risk because they are poor. Once again we are reminded that justice is not equal and that the system is designed to keep the poor locked up.

CARES Act

Last week, **Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a roughly \$2 trillion coronavirus response measure to help strengthen the American economy and assist in recovery efforts.** Developments regarding the programming are still ongoing but listed below are some highlights of the act.

The CARES Act Includes measures for:

- Four months of more **unemployment insurance** instead of 3 months.

- \$55 billion increase for our **health care system**.
- \$150 billion for a state, tribal, and local **Coronavirus Relief fund**.
- \$10 billion for **Small Business Association** (SBA) emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to provide immediate relief for small business operating costs.
- \$17 billion for SBA to cover 6 months of payments for small businesses with existing SBA loans.
- \$30 billion in **emergency education** funding and \$25 billion in emergency transit funding.
- \$30 billion for the **Disaster Relief Fund** to provide financial assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as private nonprofits providing critical and essential services.
- More than \$10 billion for the **Indian Health Services**, and other tribal programs.

The CARES Act will also:

- Prohibit businesses controlled by the President, Vice President, Members of Congress, and heads of Executive Departments from receiving loans or investments from Treasury programs.
- Make rent, mortgage and utility costs eligible for SBA loan forgiveness.
- Ban stock buybacks for the term of the government assistance plus 1 year on any company receiving a government loan from the bill.
- Establish robust worker protections attached to all federal loans for businesses.
- Create real-time public reporting of Treasury transactions under the Act, including terms of

loans, investments or other assistance to corporations.

- Create a Treasury Department Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery to provide oversight of Treasury loans and a Pandemic Response Accountability Committee to protect taxpayer dollars.
- Add a retention tax credit for employers to encourage businesses to keep workers on payroll during the crisis.
- Provide income tax exclusion for individuals who are receiving student loan repayment assistance from their employer.
- Save hundreds of thousands of airline industry jobs but prohibit airlines from stock buybacks and CEO bonuses.

Precinct One will continue to update you on the **CARES Act** and connect you with the programs that will be funded by this legislation, once they are available.



"Stay Home, Work Safe" Order Extended to April 30

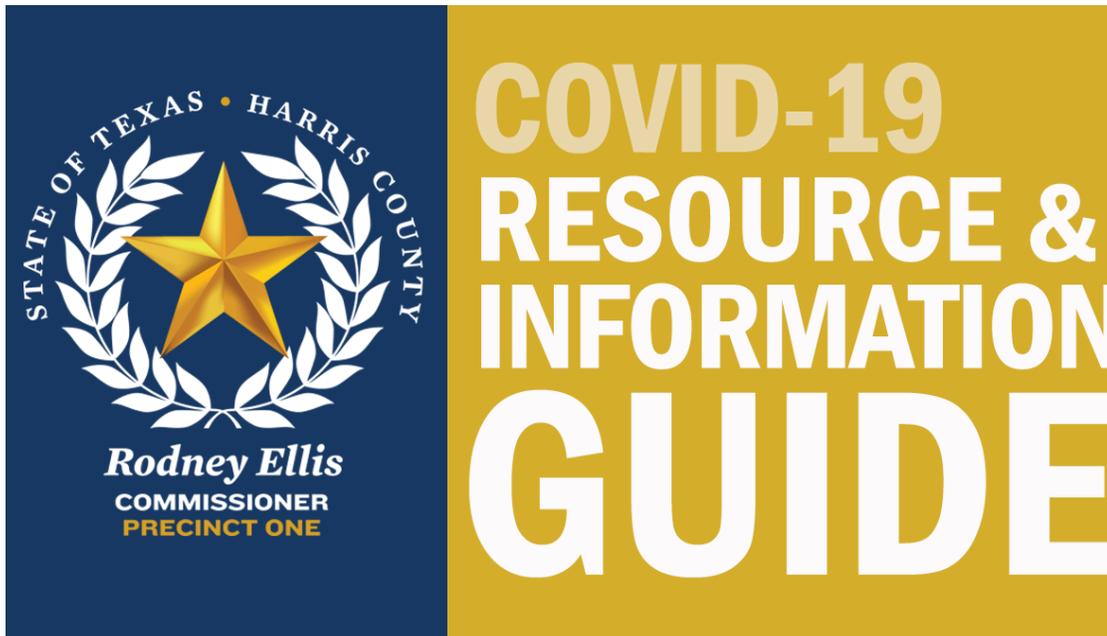
On March 31, **Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo extended the "Stay Home, Work Safe" order through April 30 as COVID-19 cases continue to rise.** The order advises residents to stay home except for essential activities and also requires non-essential businesses to shut down. To learn which activities and businesses are considered essential, click [here](#).



Say Yes to the Census 2020 | #HoustonCounts

When you respond to the 2020 Census you will include everyone who usually lives and sleeps in your home. You can respond before or after April 1 but please respond as soon as you can. Census results have an impact on planning and funding for health clinics and highways, fire departments and disaster response, education programs such as Pre-K and college tuition assistance, and so much more. Be counted to help fund programs in your community. Say

#YESTotheCensus at 2020Census.gov.



COVID-19 Resource Guide

Our Precinct One team has prepared a COVID-19 Resource Guide that has a lot of good information and trusted sources to help you and your family stay up-to-date, safe and healthy during this pandemic. Please see what resources are available for you.

- [English version](http://bit.ly/COVIDResourceGuide) or
by visiting this link:
<http://bit.ly/COVIDResourceGuide>
- [Spanish version](http://bit.ly/COVIDResourceGuide_ESP) or
by visiting this
link: [bit.ly/COVIDResourceGuide ESP](http://bit.ly/COVIDResourceGuide_ESP)

As always, we will continue fighting for equity for all residents now and after the pandemic is over.
Thank you for your help in stopping the spread of

COVID-19. Let's keep taking it one day at a time until this is over.

Sincerely,



Rodney Ellis



Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Harris County Precinct One

1001 Preston, Suite 950

Houston, TX 77002

<http://hcp1.net>

713-991-6881

