Timeline of Irresponsibility

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January 2020

January 21, 2020: [First novel coronavirus case detected](#) in the United States of America.¹

March 2020

March 4, 2020: First coronavirus case in Texas.²

March 11, 2020: World Health Organization declares [COVID-19 pandemic](#).³

March 13, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott [declares a state of disaster](#) (enabling federal funds to flow to the state) and halts elective surgeries (including abortions).⁴

March 16, 2020: First COVID-19 death in Texas.⁵

March 19, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues [first coronavirus-related executive order](#) shutting down government and businesses and banning gatherings.⁶

March 23, 2020: Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick [offers to sacrifice Texas seniors to coronavirus](#) in order to reopen the Texas economy.⁷

April 2020

April 14, 2020: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, under indictment for nearly six years, issues a letter to Texas House of Representatives Elections Committee Chair Rep. Stephanie Klick stating his “unofficial opinion” that “fear of contracting COVID-19 unaccompanied by a qualifying sickness or physical condition does not constitute a disability under the Election Code for purposes of receiving a ballot by mail.”⁸ President Donald Trump halts funding for the World Health Organization.⁹

April 15, 2020: U.S. District Court Judge Tim Sulak [rules in favor of allowing all Texans to vote by mail during coronavirus pandemic](#).¹⁰

April 17, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues [executive order](#) announcing the establishment of the 45-member Governor’s Strike Force to Open Texas and the beginning of the first phased reopening of Texas businesses.¹¹

April 23, 2020: U.S. President Donald J. Trump suggests people infected with coronavirus get an “injection” of disinfectant as a deterrent to the virus during his daily briefing.¹²

April 24, 2020: Austin police officers shoot and kill unarmed Mike Ramos.^{[13](#)}

Cover image of
*The Governor's
Report to Open
Texas*

April 27, 2020: Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas releases *The Governor's Report to Open Texas: Texans Helping Texans* with health and safety guidelines for individuals, employers, employees, the business sector and low-COVID counties along with celebratory biographies of the business leaders on the strike force and self-congratulatory reprisals of Gov. Abbott's (non-)response so far.^{[14](#)}

May 2020

May 1, 2020: Texas begins Phase I of reopening.^{[15](#)} Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton issues letter to county judges and election officers threatening prosecution for encouraging Texans to vote by mail.^{[16](#)}

To the extent third parties advise voters to apply for a ballot by mail for reasons not authorized by the Election Code, including fear of contracting COVID-19 without an accompanying qualifying disability, such activity could subject those third parties to criminal sanctions imposed by Election Code section 84.0041. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 84.0041 (providing that a person commits an offense if the person “intentionally causes false information to be provided on an application for ballot by mail”); *see also id.* § 276.013 (a person commits election fraud if the person knowingly or intentionally causes a ballot to be obtained under false pretenses, or a misleading statement to be provided on an application for ballot by mail). However, whether specific activity constitutes an offense under these provisions will depend upon the facts and circumstances of each individual case.

Excerpt from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's [letter to county election officials](#).

May 5, 2020: Audio leaked of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott acknowledging reopening will increase transmission of COVID-19.^{[17](#)}

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

Leaked Audio (Full): Gov. Abbott Knows Reopening Will Cause an Increase in Infection Rate for Texans

May 18, 2020: Texas begins Phase II of reopening.

“Our goal is to find ways to coexist with COVID-19 as safely as possible.”

— Texas Gov. Greg Abbott^{[18](#)}

May 19, 2020: U.S. District Judge Fred Biery rules that all state voters regardless of age qualify for a mail-in ballot during the coronavirus pandemic.^{[19](#)}

May 25, 2020: George Floyd murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis.^{[20](#)} No arrests are made.

May 27, 2020: Texas Supreme Court opines in official ruling that most Texans won’t get coronavirus.^{[21](#)}

JUSTICE BOYD and JUSTICE BLAND would hold that a lack of immunity to COVID-19 is a “physical condition” under § 82.002(a), though a voter would not be entitled to vote by mail without a “likelihood” that voting in person would injure the voter’s health. We all agree that “likelihood” means a probability. But for the population overall, **contracting** COVID-19 in general is highly improbable. This is not to say that the risk is not greater for certain persons or in certain situations, as we have noted. Indeed, that improbability has justified the efforts throughout the state to reopen business and activities in a gradual return to normalcy. In addition, as the State highlights, authorities planning elections are working in earnest to ensure adherence to social distancing, limits on the

Excerpt from Texas Supreme Court opinion.

May 29, 2020: Derek Chauvin finally arrested after worldwide protests.^{[22](#)} President Donald Trump terminates U.S. relationship with World Health Organization.^{[23](#)}

May 29-31, 2020: Anti-racist protests break out in response to George Floyd’s murder and the failure of public officials to arrest the police officers involved:

Texans [protested in Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and Fort Worth](#) throughout the weekend, spurred by the death of George Floyd, a black man who was killed in Minneapolis police custody Monday. Floyd had been [a longtime resident of Houston's Third Ward](#).^{[24](#)}

May 31, 2020: Gov. Greg Abbott declares the *entire* state of Texas a disaster in response to protests in some cities, allowing him to designate federal law enforcement

officers to perform the duties of peace officers in Texas.[25](#)

June 2020

June 3, 2020: Texas begins Phase III of reopening.[26](#)

June 25, 2020: Elective surgeries (including abortions) suspended in Texas metros due to coronavirus overloading hospitals.

June 26, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott reverses reopening state after a tremendous increase in coronavirus cases and deaths.

July 2020

July 2, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott finally issues statewide mask order for counties with over 20 cases of COVID-19.[27](#)

August 2020

August 17, 2020: 10,000th Texan dies of COVID-19.[28](#)

September 2020

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott quietly disbands his Strike Force to Open Texas.[29](#)

September 17, 2020: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott begins reopening Texas businesses again.[30](#)

October 2020

October 14, 2020: Texas bars allowed to reopen.[31](#)

November 2020

November 3, 2020: President Trump fails to win reelection as president but refuses to concede. Texas voter turnout best in nearly three decades.[32](#) Thus explaining Republican attempts to pass voter-suppression legislation in 2021.

November 16, 2020: Texas becomes first state to surpass 1 million coronavirus cases.[33](#)

January 2021

January 6, 2021: Insurrection at the U.S. Capitol after a pro-Trump rally, which Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton attended.[34](#)

Graphic Videos Detail Violence at US Capitol on January 6 - WATCH LIVE | Voice of America - English. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-politics/graphic-videos-detail-violence-us-capitol-january-6-watch-live>. Accessed 15 June 2021.

January 28, 2021: President Joe Biden revives U.S. funding for World Health Organization.^{[35](#)}

February 2021

February 10, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's office informed of looming natural gas shortages by Public Utility Commission of Texas Chair DeAnne Walker.^{[36](#)}

February 11, 2021: Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick announces [plan to penalize environmentally sensitive investors](#).^{[37](#)}

February 13-17, 2021: [Winter Storm Uri](#) strikes Texas causing cascading failures of energy and public health infrastructure (gas, electric, water). Death toll: at least 210 people. (State's initial count was 111.)^{[38](#)} A [tally by the Houston Chronicle](#) finds almost double the number of deaths.^{[39](#)} A [BuzzFeed News data analysis](#) estimates 700 deaths from the storm.^{[40](#)}

February 16, 2021: The Texas Public Utility Commission orders that wholesale electricity prices in the state should be set at \$9,000 per megawatt-hour.^{[41](#)}

That's exactly what happened: energy prices skyrocketed. Now, as the dust is settling and the Texas Legislature has adjourned after passing several bills that aimed to fix the state's fragile electric grid, three truths have become clear: the

state’s policymakers have not done enough to ensure the resilience and reliability of the grid, the February 16 PUC order kept electricity prices far too high for far too long, and Texas ratepayers will ultimately be saddled with about \$37.7 billion in excess energy costs.⁴²

Chart 1
ERCOT Electricity Generation by Source, Demand and Outages During Texas Deep Freeze

NOTES: "Demand forecast" is what is anticipated in the Electric Reliability Council of Texas day-ahead market. "Other" includes hydroelectric power and grid interchange.

SOURCES: Energy Information Administration; Poweroutage.us; Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

Cost of Texas' 2021 Deep Freeze Justifies Weatherization.

<https://www.dallasfed.org:443/research/economics/2021/0415>. Accessed 16 Apr. 2021.

February 17, 2021: Gov. Greg Abbott falsely blames renewable energy for power outages in Texas.⁴³ U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, flies to Cancun, Mexico to escape freezing weather, leaving his constituents (and pet dog) behind.⁴⁴ Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁴⁵ Republican Texas state Rep. Gary Gates abandons constituents via private jet to Orlando, Florida.⁴⁶

"Texans would be without electricity for longer than three days to keep the federal government out of their business."

— Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry⁴⁷

February 17-18, 2021: ERCOT's visitor logs show Ryland Ramos, Gov. Greg Abbott's top energy policy adviser, and Abbott-appointed Public Utility Commission chair DeAnn Walker — along with top regulatory officials from Centerpoint Energy, Oncor, AEP and

Texas-New Mexico Power Company — signed in at the agency’s operations center in Taylor, where ERCOT’s high-tech control room handling the flow of power to most Texans, is located at about 10 p.m. on Wednesday, February 17, and stayed there until 8:49 a.m. the next day.

The timeline in the visitor logs means the Abbott aide was on the scene when ERCOT decided — just before midnight Wednesday — to quit ordering rolling power outages and then, in the wee hours of Thursday, to leave the maximum prices for electricity in place.⁴⁸

February 18, 2021: At least 3.4 million Texans without power.⁴⁹

February 19, 2021: 13.5 million Texans experience water disruption.⁵⁰ Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton still in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁵¹

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

[Letter to Gov. Greg Abbott from Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff](#), 19 February 2021.

March 2021

March 2, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott lifts statewide mask mandate and “reopens Texas 100 percent.”⁵²

March 9, 2021: Texas Public Utility Commission Chairman Arthur D’Andrea, who was appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott, tells investors on a Bank of America Securities-hosted call to expect little improvement to the Texas energy grid and that he would attempt to protect their windfall profits from Winter Storm Uri.⁵³ The call was closed to the public and news media and [later leaked to Texas Monthly](#).⁵⁴

March 10, 2021: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton threatens to sue the city of Austin and Travis County if they don’t lift requirements for mask-wearing inside local businesses.⁵⁵

We have already taken you to court under similar circumstances. You lost. If you continue to flout the law in this manner, we'll take you to court again and you will lose again.

To that end, you and your local health authorities have until 6:00 p.m. today to rescind any local mask mandates or business-operating restrictions, retract any related public statements, and come into full compliance with GA-34. Otherwise, on behalf of the State of Texas, I will sue you.

For Liberty and Justice in Texas,

KEN PAXTON
Attorney General of Texas

cc: Dr. Mark Escott, Austin Public Health

Excerpt of letter from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to Austin and Travis County leaders.

March 11, 2021: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sues to block Austin and Travis County pandemic orders requiring employees and customers to wear a face-covering in local businesses.^{[56](#)}

March 12, 2021: State District Judge Lora Livingston declines Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's request to block Austin mask mandates until a full hearing.^{[57](#)}

March 25, 2021: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton refuses to release emails and text messages he sent during the rally in Washington, D.C. that resulted in the January 6th Capitol insurrection.^{[58](#)} U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, refuses to wear mask during press conference.^{[59](#)}

Paxton is a stain on Texas integrity, what remains of it, and should have faced trial on his pending felony charges years ago or at least been shunned by Gov. Greg Abbott and other party leaders when his own top staff accused him last year of abuse of office, bribery, improper influence and other possible criminal acts.

If he had an ounce of shame, he would follow President Nixon's example from 1974, and the perpetual advice from this editorial board, and resign.

Instead, Paxton last week gave Texas another reminder of how ill-suited he is to play the dual role of suspected criminal and Texas attorney general. Reporters from Houston, Dallas and throughout Texas have been asking his office to share — as the law requires — his texts, emails and other messages from on and around Jan. 6, the day of infamy in the U.S. Capitol. Paxton had flown to Washington to speak at the rallies leading up to the armed insurrection — although at whose request and on whose dime, he won't say.

[Excerpt from a Houston Chronicle editorial from March 30, 2021](#)

March 26, 2021: State District Judge Lora Livingston rules against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and in favor of allowing Austin’s mask mandate to continue.^{[60](#)}

March 29, 2021: President Joe Biden urges states to reinstate and/or continue mask mandates.^{[61](#)}

April 2021

April 1, 2021: Republicans in the Texas Senate pass voter-suppression legislation.^{[62](#)} Senate Bill 7 would:

- Limit early voting to the hours of 6 AM to 9 PM (thus making it more difficult for shift workers and others on non-9-to-5 schedules to vote);
- Ban drive-thru voting;
- Prohibit local elections officials from encouraging qualified (read: disabled and elderly) voters to apply for mail-in ballots (thus ensuring no one ever learns of the opportunity ever again);
- Strengthen the authority of partisan poll watchers to challenge voters, including allowing them to video voters receiving assistance in filling out their ballots.^{[63](#)}

May 2021

May 17, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott prematurely ends the state’s participation in the federally funded pandemic-related unemployment programs effective June 26th.^{[64](#)} Texas will stop participating in ARPA programs, including Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and the Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation Program (MEUC). This includes the \$300 weekly unemployment supplement from the FPUC.^{[65](#)} U.S. Federal Reserve issues results of latest Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking, *[Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2020](#)*, revealing a quarter of American adults worse off at the end of 2020 than at the same time in 2019.^{[66](#)} Over a third of Americans reported not being able to afford to cover a \$400 emergency with on-hand cash or its equivalent.^{[67](#)}

Adults doing worse off than 12 months ago

Image from [Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking, 2013-2020](#). Accessed 19 May 2021.

Adults who would cover a \$400 emergency expense using cash or its equivalent

Percent

Make Full Screen

Survey Year	Would handle \$400 expense with cash or equivalent
2013	50
2014	53
2015	54
2016	56
2017	59
2018	61
2019	63
2020	64

Note: Among all adults.

Image from [Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking, 2013-2020](#). Accessed 28 May 2021.

SAR Editorial Collective <sareditors@gmail.com>

ICYMI: Governor Abbott Announcement & Texans Back to Work Roundtable-May 20, 2021

Texas Workforce Commission <TWC@public.govdelivery.com>
 Reply-To: TWC@public.govdelivery.com
 To: sareditors@gmail.com

Mon, May 17, 2021 at 4:59 PM

Texas Employers:

Today, Governor Abbott announced that Texas would no longer participate in the federally funded unemployment programs effective June 26th. Texas will stop participating in ARPA programs, including Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and the Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation Program (MEUC). TWC and our Workforce Solutions partners continue to offer services to assist individuals in finding employment and their training needs. We will be providing additional information to claimants as we transition away from these programs.

You can see Governor Abbott's announcement at the following link: <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-end-to-federal-pandemic-related-unemployment-benefits>

Also, here is the link to the letter he sent to the Department of Labor: <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/O-WalshMartin202105171215.pdf>

In addition, please join the Office of the Commissioner Representing Employers and the Office of the Governor-Economic Development & Tourism Division on **Thursday, May 20th at 10:00am** as we hear from a number of industry association experts discussing best practices, resources and strategies for recruiting, hiring and retaining potential employees. To register, go to: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_J-cvHARS4KmE0EJwA7xQ

Industry Associations/Partners include the following: Workforce Solutions, Texas Economic Development Corporation, Texas Association of Business, National Federation of Independent Business-Texas, Texas Travel Alliance, Texas Chamber of Commerce Executives, Texas Truckers Association, Texas Association of Builders and the Texas Restaurant Association.

Sincerely,

Aaron Demerson
 Commissioner Representing Employers
 Texas Workforce Commission

This email was sent to sareditors@gmail.com using GovDelivery Communications Cloud on behalf of: Texas Workforce Commission 101 E 15th St, Rm 665 Austin, TX 78778-0001

Screenshot of Email from Texas Workforce Commission announcing Gov. Abbott's termination of enhanced unemployment benefits for coronavirus-affected workers.
 / William O. Pate II, May 19, 2021

May 18, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues executive order barring state and local government entities (including counties, cities, school districts and public health

authorities) and officials from requiring people to wear masks. Failure to comply can result in a \$1,000 fine, he notes in the executive order.⁶⁸ Mask ban becomes effective on May 22, 2021. School districts can require them until June 5.

May 27, 2021: Texas Legislature ends 87th Legislative Session without meaningfully addressing health or energy crises facing the state.

Even as officials and statisticians continued to tally the dead from the February blackouts, legislators rushed forward with promises that they would make certain the grid never failed again. But the House and Senate could not agree on what measures to pursue. And both bodies were hamstrung by their deference to energy executives and investors, and especially natural gas producers. A slate of bills languished until the final Sunday of the session. The **ones that passed** would overhaul the state's Public Utility Commission and require weatherization of power plants, transmission lines, and the natural gas facilities that provide the fuel to generate power—but they do not specify **how to pay for it**. Nor do they address how to pay for the financial losses power companies faced in the storm—losses that Texas households and businesses will likely be footing for years to come. ⁶⁹

May 28, 2021: U.S. Senate Republicans block the creation of a commission to investigate January 6th insurrection at U.S. Capitol after Republican U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell asks “a personal favor” of fellow Republicans to vote against it.⁷⁰

May 31, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott threatens via Twitter to veto funding for legislative staff in revenge for Democrats breaking quorum to kill voter-suppression legislation under consideration by the Texas House of Representatives.

Greg Abbott
@GregAbbott_TX

I will veto Article 10 of the budget passed by the legislature.

Article 10 funds the legislative branch.

No pay for those who abandon their responsibilities.

Stay tuned.

31 May 2021 • 18:13

www.pikaso.me

Image 1

San Antonio Review
@SanAntoReview

[@GregAbbott_TX](#) How long have your paychecks been stopped?

3 Jun 2021 • 12:32

www.pikaso.me

Image 2

June 2021

Of nearly 10,000 bills and resolutions filed this session, about 3,800 were passed. The governor vetoed 21 pieces of legislation this session. In each of the last two

regular sessions, he vetoed about 50.

— Allie Morris, “From backing the blue to the ‘Star-Spangled Banner’: Bill that are becoming law in Texas,” *Dallas Morning News*, 21 June 2021

June 1, 2021: U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, calls concerns about climate change “a cult” at the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce Energy Summit.^{[71](#)} Gov. Greg Abbott signs House Bill 1900, which financially penalizes cities that cut or reallocate their police budgets; Senate Bill 23, which forces counties with populations of 1 million or more to receive voter approval before decreasing their law enforcement budgets; and House Bill 2366, which increases penalties for interfering with or harming law enforcement. Senate Bill 68, which would have required peace officers to intervene and report when a fellow officer uses excessive force was left unsigned.^{[72](#)} Significantly, Abbott’s signature on HB 1900 law restores funds, personnel and authority for tasks earlier removed from Austin Police Department by the city council.

Under that law – which takes effect Sept. 1, after the City Council adopts the budget in August but before FY 22 begins Oct. 1 – APD’s budget this year has to be at least \$432 million; otherwise, the state can siphon off Austin’s sales tax revenue and prevent it from increasing property taxes or utility rates. The statute would also not only prevent Austin from annexing any territory until it made APD whole, but would require the city to hold disannexation elections in each area annexed in the last 30 years.^{[73](#)}

June 2, 2021: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton tells Steve Bannon that former President Donald Trump would have lost in Texas in the 2020 election if his office had not successfully blocked counties from mailing out applications for mail-in ballots to all registered voters.^{[74](#)}

June 8, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott declares that legislation passed during the session “fixes all of the flaws” of the Texas energy grid.

“Bottom line is that everything that needed to be done was done to fix the power grid in Texas.”

— Texas Gov. Greg Abbott^{[75](#)}

June 14, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signs Senate Bill 6, which shields companies from lawsuits for pandemic-related injuries or deaths and makes it more difficult to sue

health care providers or businesses for exposures to illnesses arising from COVID-19 or future pandemics.^{[76](#)}

June 15, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signs House Bill 1925, which is a statewide camping ban, making it a Class C misdemeanor to camp in unapproved public spaces.^{[77](#)}

June 17, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signs Senate Bill 1111, prohibiting Texans from registering to vote using a commercial post office box (as many homeless do).^{[78](#)}

June 18, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott vetoes funding for the legislative branch in revenge for Texas House Democrats who broke quorum to prevent Senate Bill 7 from reaching the floor.^{[79](#)}

June 22, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues call for first special legislative session to begin on July 8, 2021, with legislative priorities to be added later.^{[80](#)}

July 2021

July 4, 2021: 50 percent of eligible Texans are fully vaccinated, according to *The Dallas Morning News*' data.^{[81](#)}

July 7, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues agenda for first called special session that focuses on restricting voting rights, blocking refugees from seeking asylum at the border and limiting the topics taught in public schools.^{[82](#)} (Not included in the call are public health or energy infrastructure.)

July 23, 2021: After hospitalizations increase with the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19, Austin reenters Stage 4 of its COVID-19 risk-based guidelines.^{[83](#)}

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention interpretive summary for the week states:

The United States is once again seeing a rise in COVID-19 [cases](#), [hospitalizations](#), and [deaths](#). As of July 22, 35% of U.S. counties are experiencing high [levels of community transmission](#). COVID-19 cases are on the rise in nearly

90% of U.S. jurisdictions, and we are seeing outbreaks in parts of the country that have low [vaccination](#) coverage. These worrisome trends are due, in part, to the rapid spread of the highly transmissible B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant. An increase in the number of cases will put more strain on healthcare resources and could lead to more hospitalizations and deaths.

Estimated Proportions of SARS-CoV-2 Lineages for Health and Human Services Region 6, which includes Texas. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>. Accessed 23 July 2021.

An increase in COVID-19 cases also creates more opportunities for the virus to mutate, which could lead to the emergence of new [variants](#). Variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are now responsible for all cases in the United States. The original strain is no longer detected among variants circulating throughout the country. The B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant is now the predominant variant in the United States, making up an estimated [83.2%](#) of recent U.S. cases. The best way to slow the emergence of new variants is to reduce the spread of infection by taking measures to protect yourself, including getting a vaccine when it's available to you.

COVID-19 is now a preventable disease. The COVID-19 [vaccines](#) authorized for use in the United States are safe and are effective against B.1.617.2 and other variants. If you receive a [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) or [Moderna](#) COVID-19 vaccine, you will need [2 shots](#) to get the most protection. You should get your second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you [not to get it](#). If you are only partially vaccinated, you are more likely to get infected, get sick, and spread the virus to other people. When you

are [fully vaccinated](#), you are protected against severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

Note to readers: To find a vaccine provider near you, visit [Vaccines.gov](#) or your [state or local public health department](#) website. You can also text your zip code to 438829 to get 3 locations near you with vaccines in stock. If you prefer your information in Spanish, text your zip code to 822862. You can also call the National COVID-19 Vaccination Assistance Hotline at 1-800-232-0233 to get help in English, Spanish, and more than 150 other languages. It also has a TTY line to support access by hearing impaired callers. If you or someone you know is hesitant about COVID-19 vaccination, CDC has information and answers to [frequently asked questions](#) to help inform the decision.^{[84](#)}

July 29, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues Executive Order 38 banning governmental entities from mandating COVID-19 vaccination or proof of vaccination to receive benefits or services (“vaccine passports”) and overriding any locally issued COVID-19-related restrictions, including operating restrictions on businesses and requirements to wear masks. (Note schools cannot require masks to be worn but jails can.) He also removes the ability of local governments to jail those who violate public health orders.^{[85](#)}

July 30, 2021: 900th COVID-19 death in Austin-Travis County.^{[86](#)}

August 2021

August 2, 2021: State of Texas denies requests from hospitals for additional staffing as COVID-19 hospitalizations surge across the state.^{[87](#)}

August 4, 2021: Analysis shows Texas Republican leaders received significantly larger campaign donations from energy companies after the legislative session in what “looks like a reward for not passing more stringent regulations and raises questions about whether lawmakers let the oil, gas and the broader energy industry off easy for its massive failures.”^{[88](#)}

August 9, 2021: Republican-controlled Texas Supreme Court declines to overturn Gov. Greg Abbott’s veto that wiped out funding for the Legislature for the next two years.^{[89](#)}

August 10, 2021: Austin and surrounding area down to two intensive care unit (ICU) beds. Texas reaches lowest number of available ICU beds during the state has had

entire pandemic. “Region O — which is made up of 2.3 million people in 11 counties: Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Lee, Llano and San Saba — had only two staffed ICU beds. . . . According to data, among the total hospitalized patients more than 80% are not vaccinated. Fully and partially vaccinated residents have been hospitalized but at 15.5% and 3.7% respectively.” School districts and cities actively defy Gov. Abbott’s orders by requiring masks be worn in schools and public buildings.⁹⁰ State District Judge Antonia “Toni” Arteaga issues a temporary restraining order blocking Gov. Abbott’s order, clearing the way for the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District to require students and employees in public and private schools to wear masks and to quarantines in cases where unvaccinated students were exposed to people found to have COVID-19.⁹¹ Judge Tonya Parker rules that Gov. Greg Abbott’s executive order on mask mandates is “not [a] necessary action to combat the pandemic”, and agreed to a temporary restraining order that will allow Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins to require face coverings.⁹²

August 11, 2021: Gov. Greg Abbott and Attorney General Ken Paxton file their first court action to strike down mask mandates enacted by local officials in defiance of Abbott’s ban on them.⁹³

August 19, 2021: Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick falsely blames the most recent resurgence of COVID-19 patients on Black Americans.

Democrats like to blame Republicans on (low vaccination rates). Well, the biggest group in most states are African Americans who have not been vaccinated. The last time I checked, over 90% of them vote for Democrats.

—Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick⁹⁴

August 25, 2021: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issues executive order barring vaccination mandates and proof of vaccination to access services (vaccine passports”), adding the latter to his second special session call.⁹⁵

COVID-19 drove a spike in Texas deaths

Weekly fatalities, Jan. 1964 - Mar. 2021

Chart: Zach Despart • Source: Texas DSHS

Despart, Zach. "New Chart Reveals Sobering Look at COVID's Impact on Texas Deaths." *Houston Chronicle*, 28 June 2021, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/health/article/The-impact-of-COVID-19-on-Texas-deaths-in-one-16275226.php>.

56,345 — Total Texas deaths from COVID-19 as of 7:22 AM CT on August 28, 2021.⁹⁶

Additional Resources:

- [ERCOT's Preliminary Report on Causes of Generator Outages and Derates For Operating Days February 14 - 19, 2021 Extreme Cold Weather Event](#)
- CIRCLE's [State-by-State 2020 Youth Voter Turnout: The South](#)
- [Texas Department of State Health Services Winter Storm Deaths Tally](#)
- [BuzzFeed News data analysis on Winter Storm Uri deaths in Texas](#)
- Report from former Public Utility Commission of Texas members: [Never Again: How to prevent another major Texas electricity failure](#)
- Ratcliffe, R. G. "[Texas Lawmakers Had Two Crises to Address. They Ignored Them in Favor of Sideshows.](#)" *Texas Monthly*, Texas Monthly, 1 June 2021.

- [Houston Chronicle's "Failures of Power"](#) series documenting how 20 million Texans lost power in a deadly freeze after state lawmakers brushed aside a decade of warnings about the increasingly vulnerable electric grid.
 - ["Profit instead of safety,"](#) May 20, 2021
 - ["I lost my best friend,"](#) May 24, 2021
 - ["Fixing Texas' unreliable power grid won't be cheap or easy. Can we trust politicians to get it done?"](#), May 25, 2021
 - ["10 ways to fix the Texas power grid, according to experts,"](#) May 25, 2021
- [City of San Antonio Community Emergency Preparedness Committee Report: A Response to the February 2021 Winter Storm](#)

CEP%20Report%20Final[1].pdf

3 MB

- [City of Austin Winter Storm Review Task Force Final Report, July 30, 2021](#)

[Austin Winter Storm Review Task Force Final Report.pdf](#)

1 MB

- *Texas Tribune's* [Coronavirus in Texas](#)
- "Timeline of Irresponsibility" bibliography also available at <https://zbib.org/ee4783e64c654d0db29d307d3661d37a>.

William O. Pate II is the founding editor and publisher of San Antonio Review. He lives in Austin.

Footnotes

1.

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