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Southern DAILY

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Council Member Alice Chen announces Re-Election Bid

Council Member Alice Chen seeks 2nd term on Stafford City Council as she outlines her goals for economic growth, education & beating the pandemic



STAFFORD, TEXAS – Alice Chen, Council Member for Position #1 on Stafford city council officially kicks off her re-election campaign for a second term. Recently elected Mayor Pro Tem, Alice Chen seeks to work on citywide economic growth, build a stronger education infrastructure at the Stafford Municipal School District, as well as lay a path ahead in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council Member Chen remarked, “I am beyond excited to officially announce that I will be running for a second term. I am very proud of the work we have been able to accomplish in my first term in office. Creating opportunities for young people, organizing relief efforts and being able to be of service during these unstable and trying times is something I’m immensely grateful for. As an immigrant, I’m incredibly thankful for all that this country and this city has given me, and I

want to thank the people of Stafford for affording me this opportunity to give something back.” Despite being on council for just one term, Council Member Chen has accumulated a number of impressive feats. She raised over \$75,000 in a citywide fundraising effort with local community organizations, Stafford-area businesses and nonprofits to send the Stafford MSD band to the Sugar Bowl. She was instrumental in heading the COVID-19 relief efforts, working with city and county officials to supply much needed PPE materials such as masks, gloves, face shields, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer to the city’s first responders and Stafford residents. She also worked with the Asian Americans Salute Frontline Heroes Project, which delivered over 15,000 meals to first responders and front line healthcare workers in the city. In addition, She also played a key role in balancing the budget with unanimous approval, helping taxpayers and keeping the city running. Council Member Chen’s campaign has been endorsed by State Rep. District 27 Ron Reynolds, Fort Bend County District Attorney Brian Middleton, Fort Bend County Pct. 2 Constable Daryl L. Smith Sr., Fort Bend County Sheriff Eric Fagan, Stafford City Mayor Cecil Willis, Stafford City Council Member Ken Mathew, Stafford City Council Member Virginia Rosas, Stafford City Council Member Don Jones, Stafford City Council Member Xavier Herrera, SMSD Board Trustee President Christopher Caldwell, SMSD Board Trustee Greg Holsapple, SMSD Board Trustee Jacqueline Jean-Baptiste, SMSD Board Trustee Manuel Hinojosa, SMSD Board Trustee Ash Hamirani, Fort Bend WC&ID #2 Director John Rose, Fort Bend WC&ID #2 Director Harvey Koudelka, Planning and Zoning Commission Vice Chairman William K. Bostic, Jr., Planning and Zoning Commissioner Aldrin

George, Planning and Zoning Commissioner Mary Ann Smith, Planning and Zoning Commissioner Lana Hoelsing, and Planning and Zoning Commissioner Adam Sanchez. (Partial endorsement list). Mayor Willis stated, “Alice is someone that I consider to be the prime example of a good public servant. What impresses me most about her is her fervent commitment to community service. On Council, she volunteered half her stipend to help keep the city’s budget afloat and displayed the kind of leadership one looks for in their representative. As a former Council Member, I would say that Alice played a vital role both as a community leader and a Council Member in Stafford’s past. But as Mayor, I will say that she undoubtedly has a pivotal role to play in building Stafford’s future.” Council Member Chen has stated that if given a second term, she would like to fight for maintaining zero property taxes, focus on creating more opportunities for small and local businesses, develop STEM programs for children and work with county officials to streamline the process of COVID-19 vaccine distribution for residents of Stafford. Council Member Chen has an MBA, and she is a certified Texas CPA and small business owner. She served as Congressman Al Green’s Community Liaison for over 12 years. She has also served on numerous boards, including the Asian Chamber of Commerce, PBS and the Houston Community College Foundation. She was President of Houston Chinese CPA Association, Stafford Planning and Zoning Commissioner and Stafford Parks Committee member. She currently sits on the Stafford Finance Committee and SMSD Stem Focus Group.

Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 bill wins final approval in House

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The House of Representatives gave final approval on Wednesday to one of the largest economic stimulus measures in U.S. history, a sweeping \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill that gives President Joe Biden his first major victory in office. U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) wields her gavel ahead of the final passage in the House of Representatives of U.S.

President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus disease (COVID-19) relief bill inside the House Chamber of the Capitol in Washington, U.S., March 10, 2021. REUTERS/Joshua Roberts The measure provides \$400 billion for \$1,400 direct payments to most Americans, \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments, an expansion of the child tax credit and increased funding for vaccine

distribution. Forecasters expect it to supercharge the U.S. economic recovery. “Help is here,” Biden wrote in a tweet after the vote. The White House said he plans to sign the bill on Friday. Approval by a 220-211 vote in the Democratic-controlled chamber came with zero Republican support after weeks of partisan debate and

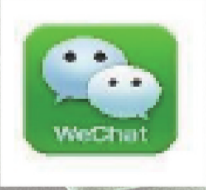
wrangling in Congress. Democrats described the legislation as a critical response to a pandemic that has killed more than 528,000 people and thrown millions out of work. “This is a historic day. It is the beginning of the end of the great COVID depression,” Democratic Representative Jan Schakowsky said.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

03/10/2021



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Southern News Group 40th Anniversary 1979-2019

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Texas Totally Opens Up Today



Governor Abbott's executive order allows the state's mask mandate to be lifted today and all businesses can totally open back up.

Governor Abbott said, "It is clear from the recoveries, from the vaccinations, from the reduced hospitalizations and from the safe practices that Texans are using that the State mandates are no longer needed."

Also starting from today, all businesses of any kind are allowed to open 100

percent.

The governor's action has really made President Biden mad and most democratic mayors and county judges did not support the governor's decision.

After the winter storm nightmare in Texas, Governor Abbott's support rate dropped. The reason he took this action may be that he is trying to raise his popularity.

Let us all hope the opening of our state will lead to better days for all of us.



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Editor's Choice



Asylum seeking unaccompanied minors are transported in a U.S. Border Patrol vehicle after they crossed the Rio Grande river into the United States from Mexico on a raft in Penitas, Texas, March 9, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



Migrant families and children sit in the back of a police truck for transport after they crossed the Rio Grande River into the United States from Mexico in Penitas, Texas, March 5, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



Activists dressed in Handmaid's Tale costumes walk as they take part in a demonstration to mark International Women's Day in Sao Paulo, Brazil. REUTERS/Carla Carniel



Texas State Trooper asks asylum-seeking migrants Edith and son Harbin Ordonez, 4, to come out of hiding after the Honduran nationals crossed the Rio Grande into the United States from Mexico on a raft in Penitas, Texas, March 9, 2021. About a dozen asylum-seeking migrants hid in the thick brush before being located by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations (AMO) helicopter and were taken into custody for processing. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

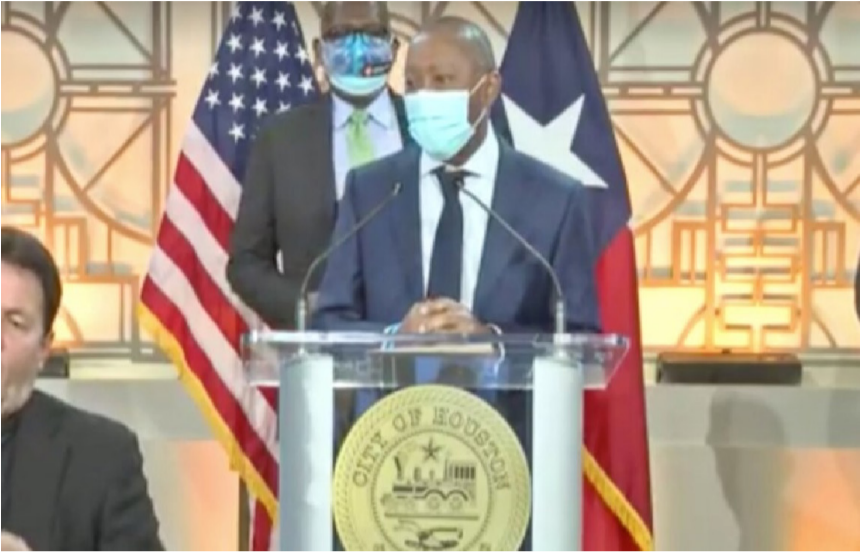


Smugglers return towards Mexico after transporting migrant families and children across the Rio Grande River into the United States in Penitas, Texas, March 6, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



A shoe is seen surrounded by wristbands discarded by asylum-seeking migrants from Central America along the banks of the Rio Grande river where migrants entered the United States from Mexico, in Penitas, Texas, March 8, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

UK Variant Found In 31 Of 39
Water Treatment Plants, City Says



Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner Answers Questions At A Press Conference On UK Variant in Houston.

Key Point

The city’s health authority said on Feb. 8, the U.K. variant was found in 21 of the city’s 39 wastewater treatment plants. Fourteen days later, that number has grown.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

HOUSTON, Texas -- According to Houston’s health authority Dr. David Persse, the U.K. variant is being found “in large amounts” and is spreading throughout the city fast. He said on Feb. 8, the U.K. variant was found in 21 of the city’s 39 wastewater treatment plants. Fourteen days later, on Feb. 22, he said the variant was found in 31 out of 39 treatment plants. “19% of all the virus that has been tested in the wastewater across the city has the genome that’s consistent with the U.K. variant,” said Persse. “That does not mean that 19% of the people in Houston are infected with the U.K. variant ... it does not mean that. We know that there is a fairly large amount of the U.K. variant in our community and it is spreading.”

Sylvester Turner @SylvesterTurner
Our doctors and those in the medical field are concerned about a fourth #COVID19 wave. With places opening to 100%, we

are concerned. Please continue to keep your mask on while you are around others and continue to take the necessary precautions that will combat this virus.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER VARIANTS?

As of Monday afternoon, Persse said the wastewater is being tested for other COVID-19 variants, such as the Brazilian and South African variants. However, the measurements have not been concluded, therefore new data was not available to report, Persse said.



Wastewater treatment plant, Houston, Texas.

“We are concerned about people dropping their guard and not wearing their masks and gathering in ways in which they wouldn’t,” he said. “Remember, the U.K. variant is the one that spreads much more easily. Those viruses are in the community so, the race is on to get as many people vaccinated as possible before the U.K. variant is able to take over and cause us to have another surge”

NEW NUMBERS

As of Monday afternoon, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said the positivity rate across the city is now 13.1%, which has increased since last week. The city’s health department said this is the second week in a row in which the positivity rate has seen a slight uptick.

Houston Health Dept @Houston-Health

#Houston’s latest 14-day average #COVID19 positivity rate is 13.1%. This is the second week in a row of a slight uptick. Let’s remember the things we can do to turn it around. (1/2) #hounews

In addition, the city has reported 318 new coronavirus cases, making the total case count 175,150. The death toll now stands at 2,018.

“We continue to make progress [and] getting people vaccinated, but we are nowhere near landing herd immunity,” said Turner.

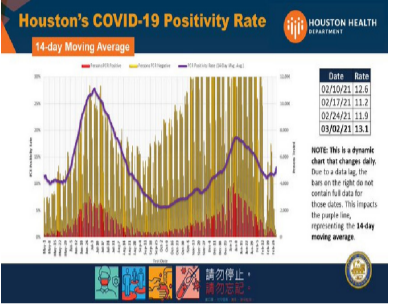


UK variant spread tracked to Houston’s wastewater system. “GLIMMER OF HOPE”

Texas is two days away from being “100%” open, but Turner offered what he described as “a glimmer of hope.”

During his briefing on Monday, Turner said the owner of Concrete Cowboy, a popular Houston bar on Washington Avenue, wrote Turner an email to advise him that a planned “mask-off” party has been canceled.

I appreciate the owners of @ConcreteCowboyH for putting the safety of their employees and guests as a top priority. Today, they wrote to me stating they would cancel the mask off party that was scheduled for this Wednesday and continue to take measures that is safe.



#COVID19 — Sylvester Turner (@SylvesterTurner) March 8, 2021

“It was never our intention to host a party where we encourage patrons to not wear a mask,” stated the email, which was read aloud by Turner during his briefing. “I’m a business owner of multiple venues in the Washington corridor and public safety is our top concern.”

The Texas’ mask mandate lift and the several “mask-off parties” has caused concerns of other similar events from other states coming to Texas. Turner said promoters in states that are not allowed to operate at 100% and forced to wear a mask, are promoting bringing those events to cities like Houston, Dallas and Austin.

Turner said Concrete Cowboy will not be open Wednesday night.

“This is not the time to drop our masks or drop our guard in the fight against the pandemic,” said Turner. (Courtesy <https://abc13.com/>)



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Stay Home!

COMMUNITY

Wear Mask!

Nation Taking Baby Steps
Towards Normality After
One Year In Lockdown



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

New federal guidelines released Monday saying it is safe for fully vaccinated people to gather indoors with each other without masks is adding hope that a return to normality — or something close to it — might be getting closer as the nation hits one year in a locked-down state. No one knows exactly when it will be normal again — if ever given how the coronavirus pandemic has elevated concerns about contagious diseases in general. There’s also quite a bit of uncertainty going forward, especially as variants of the virus continue to circulate. Still, experts are more optimistic than they have been since the pandemic began, as political leaders plot a path forward, movie theaters in New York reopen and the Chicago Cubs prepare to welcome fans to Wrigley Field for Opening Day — albeit at a 20 percent capacity. “I think we’re on a trajectory to be in really good shape this summer, certainly in the July timeframe,” said Eric Topol, professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research. Former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said last week he thinks vaccination appointments will be “wide open” as soon as April. Cen-

ters for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky last week pointed to a somewhat longer timeline, saying it would be take “three or four more months” to vaccinate the country. Even with a vaccination, people are being urged to take care.



The CDC guidelines issued Monday say vaccinated people should keep wearing a mask in public and when around unvaccinated people from multiple households. While experts say vaccination likely significantly reduces transmission of the virus, it also likely does not entirely eliminate it, meaning that vaccinated people should still take some precautions when around unvaccinated people. Walensky said the guidance will be updated once a larger share of the popula-

tion is vaccinated, and as more data becomes available on vaccinated people’s ability to spread the virus.

“Today’s action represents an important first step; it is not our final destination,” she said. “As more people get vaccinated, levels of COVID-19 infection decline in communities, and as our understanding of COVID immunity improves, we look forward to updating these recommendations to the public.”

The need for vaccinated people to wear masks and distancing in public won’t last forever.

“The pivot point will be after everyone has had a chance to be vaccinated,” said Robert Wachter, chair of the department of medicine at the University of California-San Francisco.

Still, the virus is not likely to be totally eliminated any time soon. A more realistic goal, experts say, is to reduce its danger such that it blends into the background rather than dominating daily life as it has for the past year. The virus will still spread among people who choose not to be vaccinated, and even among vaccinated people, there can still be occasional mild cases.



The key advantage of the vaccines is that so far they are extremely effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths, helping take the teeth out of any smaller resurgences of the virus down the line, such as next fall when the weather gets colder.

“The virus isn’t going to go away,” said Michael Mina, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “But it will begin to do less and less damage, because people are going to be immune, so even if they get sick they’re not going to die, for example. Even if they get infected, they won’t end

up in the hospital.”

“The president talked about May being a timeline when there’s going to be enough doses for every American,” Gottlieb said on CNBC last week. “I don’t think we’re going to get every American vaccinated, unfortunately, so I think as you get into the end of March, into April, supply is going to start to outstrip demand and they’re going to open up appointments. So we have about another month to go.” The major question mark over the long-term defanging of the virus is what the trajectory of the variants is. A variant first identified in South Africa has shown some ability to reduce the effectiveness of vaccines, though data so far indicates the vaccines would still protect against severe cases, the most important factor. If that variant becomes more prevalent in the United States, it could complicate the situation to some degree. More ominously, a new variant could develop that is more resistant to the vaccines.



“My concern is that we might have only seen the beginning of what these mutations are capable of,” Mina said. “Will we see in the next six months a new suite of mutations that build off of the current ones that really do do greater damage to our immune system’s ability to recognize the virus? That’s what I’m concerned about. I sure hope it doesn’t happen.” The vaccines can be updated to address new variants, and Pfizer and Moderna have both started work on that process in case it is needed. Topol said the virus could still circulate to some degree for “many years, potentially,” but “I’m hoping it is at a really low level and basically we almost eliminate the deaths and severe illness.” “I just can’t imagine it would ever be as horrific,” he added. “I’m very optimistic.”



The variants first identified in South Africa and Brazil could be less of a concern for the U.S., Topol said, because they will be “outrun” by yet another variant, first identified in the United Kingdom, which is more infectious and therefore will spread faster. Luckily, the U.K. variant responds very well to the vaccines. But it poses a danger of a new spike in the short term before vaccinations are widespread enough to fully counter it. That is in part why experts are urging states to maintain restrictions like mask mandates and restaurant limits for a few more weeks, until there are enough vaccinations to prevent the U.K. variant from really taking off.

“We have one big hurdle, one mega-hurdle, and if we get through that, we really are going to be in good shape,” Topol said. (Courtesy the.hill.com)

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