



**Crestline**  
SOLUTIONS

# COVID-19: Texas Update

May 21, 2020

## 1. Texas leadership asks for budget cuts ...

In a [letter](#) sent yesterday to all state agencies, Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick and Speaker Bonnen asked all state agencies to identify 5% savings given the “significant economic uncertainty” and to prepare for the “economic shock” due to COVID-19.

Several [methods for capturing savings were suggested](#): forgoing capital projects, avoiding travel, and keeping non-essential positions open.

Several agencies were exempted from the requirement because of their importance to the state response and the continuity of critical government functions:

- the Texas Department of Emergency Management;
- the Texas Department of State Health Services;
- the Texas Military Department;
- the Texas Workforce Commission;
- the Texas Department of Public Safety;

As well as critical government programs, such as:

- Child Protective Services
- Benefits/eligibility in Medicaid, CHIP, and other health and human services programs;
- The Foundation School Program and school safety.

It was [reported](#) yesterday that these agencies and programs make up the majority of the state's general revenue funding.

## 2. Increasing optimism regarding a vaccine ...

There is [increasing optimism](#) that a vaccine could be produced in record time ... and available by the end of the year. Several companies, such as Pfizer, have begun early tests in humans, and other research with vaccine prototypes in primates has shown promise too.

AstraZeneca, who has partnered with the University of Oxford, [received a \\$1 billion grant from BARDA](#) to develop and produce a vaccine ... the company has agreed to deliver 400 million doses.

BARDA has also [invested money in a vaccine candidate](#) being developed by French pharmaceutical company Sanofi ... whose CEO has said that the U.S. would have the right to the largest preorder of any vaccine that is ultimately produced because of the U.S.' investment. French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe contradicted that saying that all nations should have equal access.

But [lingering questions](#) about the virus, including whether antibodies provide immunity, are still clouding the push for a vaccine.

## 3. Other tidbits ...

Governor Abbott responded Tuesday to a letter sent by Democrat members of the Texas Congressional Delegation, which had asked for [tax burdens to be alleviated](#) on Texans. The Governor's [response](#) suggested that property taxes, which are set by local governments, be reduced.

A federal court's order this week to allow all Texans to [vote by mail](#) because of the pandemic was stayed the very next day.

Some states' [reporting of testing has been a bit muddled](#), including potentially Texas. The states have combined positive tests from viral tests (showing active infections) and antibody tests (showing past infections) into a single total.

That is all today.