May 5 Recap from Jake Posey: It has been eight days since Governor Abbott last provided an update us on Texas' response to the COVID-19 pandemic that included allowing restaurants, retail stores, libraries, and museums to reopen if these businesses practiced appropriate social distancing protocols and limited crowds to 25% of capacity unless they were in a community with 5 or fewer cases. Today, Abbott delivered a jam-packed press briefing amid increasing pressure from some in his own party to also give the green light to barbershops and gyms, which he did address in this briefing.

Before providing a more detailed summary of the Governor’s remarks, please see a few quick bullets (some context reminders) on what has transpired in the past week as well as some brief state related news from earlier today.

- At his last press briefing, Governor Abbott unveiled the report from his ‘Strike Force to Open Texas’ and initiated a phased reopening strategy for the state, which included: ending the statewide stay-at-home order on April 30; giving retail businesses the option to reopen at 25% patron-capacity on May 1 (50% on May 19), but continuing to prohibit the opening of close-contact businesses like barbershops, salons, gyms and bars; and allowing some sporting activities to resume, albeit with four participants max.
- The governor shared with lawmakers in a private Friday conference call his view that while we should expect higher case-counts with more testing and a greater possibility for transmission as Texas begins to “reopen,” his goal is not to reduce case increases to zero – a virtual impossibility – but rather “to reopen using strategies, that are proven strategies, that can continue to contain the spread of COVID-19.”
- Today the governor’s office confirmed a Politico report that he will meet with President Trump at the White House on Thursday as part of the administration’s efforts to promote certain gubernatorial actions in connection with state responses to the pandemic – namely those states working to “reopen.” Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds is also reported to be in attendance.
- In addition, earlier this morning, the oil and gas regulating Texas Railroad Commission voted 2-to-1 against implementing oil production proration, with Commissioner Ryan Sitton supporting the move and Chair Wayne Christian and Commissioner Christi Craddick opposing it. While Sitton argued that modeling showing a cut in oil production would help smaller producers weather the current economic storm, Christian and Craddick contended “the move would hardly make a dent in the global oil demand issue, that the state does not have the bandwidth to enforce such a sweeping new measure and that producers can determine for themselves what is best.”

COVID-19 is certainly testing various personal and collective aspects of Texan’s health, their economic outlook, and the resiliency of state and local budgets. Governor Abbott continues to stress that his decisions relative to re-opening the economy, will continue to be driven by health data.
Additional details from the briefing are provided below:

**TESTING & CASES DATA**

DSHS data as of noon today plus (24 hour increase/decrease)

- 427,210 tests administered
- 33,369 positives (+1,037)
- 15,672 active cases (+314)
- 16,791 recovered (+701)
- 906 deaths (+22)
- 1,888 active hospitalizations (+355)
- 216/254 counties w/1+ cases

With 1,037 new COVID-19 cases reported in Texas today, five of the past six days have seen case increases of 1,000+ and for the fourth day in a row, recovery numbers are increasing faster than new cases.

Testing increasing so fast that more than half of all Texas tests have been administered in just the last two weeks.

The number of new positive infections, when balanced against the total number of those tested, has now fallen to 8% or below from 10% or more just a few weeks ago.

**HOSPITAL CAPACITY**

Texas’ hospital capacity remains strong, and well ahead of dire predictions

- 19k+ hospital beds available
- 2k+ ICU beds available
- 6,600+ ventilators available

Abbott stated - “It’s so important that anyone with any kind of healthcare ailment [unrelated to COVID-19] have access to the doctors and hospitals that they need [...] hence the importance of my most recent executive order unleashing those doctors to serve those Texans.”

**CLARIFICATIONS FROM LAST WEEK**

Funerals/memorials/burials/weddings are to be treated the same as church services, i.e.:

- Limited, spaced-out seating arrangements
- Encourages digital/remote viewing where possible
- Stresses keeping 65+/health-compromised/at-risk Texans still staying home
- Asks major venues to set aside special seating-type areas for at-risk guests
- Clarifies that venues are to be treated like restaurants right now, i.e. 25% max capacity
Outdoor activities are acceptable and encouraged, however:

- At public parks, Abbott says he highly recommends people wear masks, but reiterates it is not mandated.
- Beaches, lakes, rivers, etc. should be treated with the same standard as parks, including maintaining social distancing while on watercraft.

One key restaurant clarification:

- 25% capacity limit (and potential 50% capacity limit after May 18th) do not apply to outdoor seating areas; only 6’ distancing requirements between tables apply.

SALONS/GYMS/BARS

*Effective May 8th (this Friday)* all cosmetology salons, nail salons, hair salons, tanning salons, etc. will be allowed, but not required to reopen

- One-person/one-employee appointments only
- Walk-in appointments will be allowed to wait inside a building only if someone can maintain social distancing
- Face masks are strongly encouraged for both employees and customers

*Effective May 18th, all gyms will be allowed to reopen*

- 25% capacity limit
- Aggressive sanitation and social distancing policies must be enforced
- Showers/locker rooms must remain closed for now
- Customers should use gloves covering whole hand (i.e. not fingerless)
- No outside equipment unless sanitized on-site

Bars are still not allowed to open; key note: *We know how badly the bar industry is hurting and we want to get them reopened, but the spacing and the nature of what happens at a bar preclude us from allowing bars to open at this time / (Requests ideas from bar owners and employees for how to make this work – “we want to hear from you”)*

NON-ESSENTIAL MANUFACTURING

- Texas manufacturers of all sizes who are not otherwise designated “essential” via CISA guidance may reopen on May 18th at 25% capacity
- Must utilize all safety protocols (e.g. sanitization, social distancing) and staggered staffing to avoid heavy foot-traffic through entry/exit points, common areas, etc.

LARGE OFFICE BUILDINGS

- Beginning May 18th, businesses operating out of office buildings can reopen
- Business with five or fewer employees may operate at full capacity (utilizing social distancing)
• Businesses with six or more employees must operate at 25% capacity
• Maintenance/janitorial services will be allowed to resume in advance, understanding that these services can’t be flipped on “overnight”

**TDEM/PPE STATS**

Texas Division of Emergency Management has distributed the following PPE supplies statewide:

• 22M masks
• 1.9M face masks
• 7.5M gloves
• 237k gowns
• 173k coveralls

**TMD/TESTING SITES**

• More than 3,000 soldiers have been deployed
• 1,262 are specifically dedicated to test collection
• 11,648 tests have been collected in 158 counties
• TMD has received 41,410 calls seeking a testing appointment (~wait time of six minutes)
• TMD also helping nine different food banks, distributing ~17M meals and 10M lbs. of food