*December 9, 2020*

**COVID Restrictions at the Capitol**

Senate and House Committees took testimony on COVID implications recently.

**Generic**

Plexiglass dividers on dais

Staff not allowed at the dais

Limited number of witnesses in at a time

Auditorium not for reservations and this may extend to meeting rooms due to need for social distancing the overflow of witnesses.

**House** Committee to set up protocols include:

* Briscoe Cain (R-Deer Park)
* Charlie Geren (R-Fort Worth)
* Donna Howard (D-Austin)
* Stephanie Klick (R-Fort Worth)
* Joe Moody (D-El Paso
* Chris Paddie (R-Marshall)
* John Smithee (R-Amarillo)
* Chris Turner (D-Grand Prairie)
* John Turner (D-Dallas)
* Armando Walle (D-Houston)

**SENATE:**

* On January 12, each member can have one additional person on the floor, one in the gallery and all of them will be tested for coronavirus. Members will not be allowed to transfer any of those day passes to any other member. There will be a shorter than usual ceremony.
  + On January 13, everyone may need to be tested again.
* The Senate will take off the week of January 18.
* Senate Finance will begin its meetings the week of January 25.
* For the remainder of January and then February, the Senate will meet late on Tuesdays and on the floor on Wednesdays.
* Beginning in the third week of February, other committees will start to meet on Tuesdays and Wednesdays except for Finance, which will have a heavier load of course.
* Committees would be announced, by the way, on the Friday after the rules are adopted
* No one will be allowed on the floor for resolutions, when they would usually allow the honorees to shake senators’ hands
* Those who testify in person will be required to sign up online three days in advance, they’ll need to test 24 hours in advance. They will then receive a QR code they’ll have to show at the entrance to the Texas Capitol
  + Testing can be done at the Capitol by the National Guard, which can test about a dozen people per hour, those results take up to an hour, and then people can come inside
* Media would be escorted into the Senate gallery on a specific day in their rotation and not be able to swap days with other media outlets. However, the Senate may allow for one pool reporter to be present on the floor
* The Senate staffers who sit up front near the dais will stay in those positions and be tested regularly
* There will be no big lobby days
* Staff will sit in the audience for committee hearings
* Senators expect there to be far fewer bills this session
* The Redistricting Committee will be the only committee allowed to take testimony virtually. Senators also recognize that Washington may not even send the census data to the states until mid-July

**How COVID Restrictions Affect our Work**

* No Big Lobby Day
* No/Limited Direct Action
* *Virtual* Lege. Briefing
* More Variant for Form Letters
* Call Scripts