



# Dan Patrick

Lieutenant Governor of Texas  
President of the Senate

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## **Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick Releases Protocols for Opening Day of Texas Senate**

AUSTIN - The following protocols will be in place when Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick gavels in the Texas Senate for the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session on opening day, January 12, 2021. At a time when the U.S. Capitol and many state capitol buildings are closed to the public, these protocols are designed to ensure the Texas Capitol can be open to the public. We will fight the spread of COVID-19 by doing all we can to protect the public who visit the capitol as well as employees, staff and the senators. In addition to keeping everyone safe, we also want to avoid a potential shutdown due to the virus so we can carry out our constitutional duties over the next several months.

- As always, guest seating for the opening day ceremonial session of the Texas Senate will be allocated by each of the 31 senators. This year the Lt. Governor and the senators have decided to limit floor seating to one family member at each senator's desk. There will be no floor seating outside the brass rail or anywhere else on the Senate floor. This differs from past years when the Senate Chamber floor was fully in use for family and guest seating.
- Each senator will be given 3 tickets for seats in the Senate Gallery for their family and/or constituents. This will limit the seating in the Senate Gallery to less than a hundred guests and will ensure space for proper social distancing.
- Senators have agreed to be tested for COVID-19 when entering the capitol. Staff members will be tested as well.
- Opening day guests of senators will also be tested for COVID-19. The testing is free and will yield results in 15 minutes or less. No personal data will be collected or kept regarding results.
- On opening day, all Senate guests must enter through the capitol's east entrance, where testing will be done.

- Senators have agreed to a much shorter opening day ceremony to reduce the time spent in a large gathering. The Senate is reducing all ceremonial events and gatherings this session to focus solely on their constitutional legislative duties.
- On opening day and throughout the session, most Senate offices will be open by appointment only to facilitate social distancing in their relatively small offices and to protect both the public and their staff.
- A pool of 4 members of the media who have been given credentials by the Texas Senate will be allowed in the East Gallery on opening day – as they will be for the regular session. Media will be notified of the pool rotation prior to opening day. Pool media will be escorted to their seats prior to the Senate session opening and escorted out after the Senate session ends.
- All members of the media will be required to be tested for COVID-19 to enter the capitol.

Protocols and rules for the first 60 days of the legislative session will be voted on by the senators the first week of the session. Those protocols will be released shortly thereafter.

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