

**Waller County Sheriff's Office**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 31, 2020  
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**Waller County Social Distancing Task Force: Sheriff, District Attorney,  
and Office of Emergency Management Create Partnership**

**Hempstead, TX.** – The recent Resolutions and Emergency Orders established by various governmental entities in response to protecting against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to need to emphasize, educate, and enforce those Orders throughout the community. A Waller County Social Distancing Task Force, comprised of members of the Waller County Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and the Office of Emergency Management has been created to review those calls, and respond as needed in the community to instances in which guidelines are not being followed, creating a risk to the general public. The Task Force will also work with all local law enforcement agencies in the area.

According to Sheriff R. Glenn Smith, "Our primary focus is to educate individuals and businesses on what needs to be done to comply with the Orders currently in effect, especially when a lack of compliance has alarmed the public, such as not maintaining 6 feet of distance between yourself and others, especially in a business, or perhaps having a social gathering where more than 10 people are present at the same time in close quarters."

"Please attempt to be courteous and remind others about social distancing and our Judge's Orders if your personal safety will allow it. The task force should not be notified when a simple courtesy and communication can solve a problem between citizens and/or a business. Protecting EVERYONE's Constitutional rights along with public safety are at the forefront of this effort," said Waller County District Attorney Elton Mathis.

At the same time, Judge Duhon's March 25<sup>th</sup> Order, with which the Waller County Commissioners unanimously agreed, does provide restrictions in Waller County in relation to the COVID-19 virus, by ordering the following:

- 1) Prohibiting ALL social gatherings of more than 10 people;
- 2) Requiring all residents and businesses to maintain social distancing of 6 feet between individuals at all times and for businesses to comply with Social Distancing guidelines in addition to monitoring the health and well-being of their employees on a daily basis to reduce the spread of the virus.

- 3) Urging religious institutions to provide worship services by livestreaming and social media.
- 4) Prohibiting in-restaurant dining with only take out, delivery, or drive-thru services available.
- 5) Prohibiting non-essential visitors to nursing homes, retirement, and long term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance or for an end-of-life event.
- 6) Closing schools temporarily
- 7) Prohibiting the use of public playground equipment

Judge Duhon stated, "Although I have not issued a stay-at-home Order at this time, it is my expectation that every Waller County resident and business owner do everything they can to reduce the transmission of the Coronavirus, which includes compliance with the restrictions outlined in my Order. While the best way to avoid the virus is to avoid social contact by staying home as much as humanly possible, these guidelines do provide a framework within which Waller County can do its part to reduce the spread of this virus and keep people healthy and safe. This Task Force will better enable our County government to engage with the public to 1) emphasize the importance of compliance; 2) educate the public on the Orders in place; and 3) enforce those Orders when all else fails."

The point of the task force is not to penalize but ultimately to encourage compliance and maintain social distancing standards throughout the County until this virus is no longer a threat. But anyone refusing to comply with the Order after multiple requests can ultimately face a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and confinement in jail for up to 180 days.

Anyone with complaints or issues with social distancing within Waller County can contact the Waller County Sheriff's Office at 979.826.8282 or [wallersheriff@wallercounty.us](mailto:wallersheriff@wallercounty.us), and those complaints received that relate to Judge Duhon's Order will be forwarded to the Task Force for investigation and resolution.

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