



**COUNTY JUDGE**  
Fort Bend County, Texas

The Honorable KP George  
County Judge

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May 18, 2020

Hon. Nathan L. Hecht   Hon Paul W. Green   Hon. Eva Guzman  
Hon. Debra Lehrmann   Hon. Jeffrey S. Boyd   Hon. John Phillip Devine  
Hon. Jimmy Blacklock   Hon. Brett Busby   Hon. Jane Bland

Supreme Court of Texas  
Supreme Court Building  
201 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 104  
Austin, Texas 78701

**RE: Decision to Allow the Statewide Eviction Moratorium to Expire**

Dear Chief Justice Hecht and Justices Green, Guzman, Lehrmann, Boyd, Devine, Blacklock, Busby and Bland:

From March 15 to May 9, more than 1.9 million Texans filed for unemployment relief. This is the highest unemployment has been in years, and the greatest percentage increase since the end of the Great Recession more than a decade ago. Even more sobering is that the actual number of Texans who have lost their livelihoods is probably far greater than the nearly seven percent of the population who have filed for unemployment in the past two months. Anecdotal evidence from across the state indicates that the Texas Workforce Commission remains overwhelmed by the volume of inquiries they are receiving, which leads us to the conclusion that there are many more Texans seeking unemployment than are reflected in the official figures.

According to the Texas Workforce Commission, it takes three weeks for a Texan to receive unemployment benefits from the time they submit an application- when all is going to plan. Due to the aforementioned deluge of inquiries, the length of time to process an application is longer. Those weeks without income of any kind are leaving many vulnerable Texans staring into a financial abyss. The people most likely to lose their jobs due to the pandemic are also the most likely to have lower-incomes in a regular economic climate- hourly workers in the customer service industry, dependent upon patrons at bars, restaurants, gyms, salons, and entertainment venues to receive a pay check.

The statewide eviction moratorium has allowed Texans to remain in their homes for a few weeks longer than they otherwise would have. It has enabled Texans to refrain from “doubling up” in the homes of friends and family, thus enabling people to maintain physical distancing. It has prevented families from moving into their cars, where it is impossible to maintain good hygiene. It has lessened the pressure on homeless shelters, which are often at or exceeding capacity regardless of extraordinary changes in circumstances like this one.

On May 19, we expect all of these small graces to disappear immediately. During the eviction moratorium, our office received daily calls from landlords asking when they could evict their tenants and what their options were during the interim. Tenants called seeking advice on how to pay for their basic needs. These basic needs usually exceeded the scope of housing and included inquiries regarding paying for food, utilities, and medical bills.

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act Section 4024(b) provides eviction protections to any tenant benefiting from federal housing assistances, as well as any tenants residing in properties with federally-backed mortgages. These protections extend until July 25 and are followed by a mandatory thirty-day notice to vacate period. This makes August 24 the absolute earliest date that these tenants may be displaced from their homes. These measures will prevent or delay homelessness and financial despair for millions of Americans.

However, in the state of Texas, these protections only apply to a maximum of one million households. The database that tracks qualifying households and properties is incomplete, and landlords are not required to inform their tenants of these protections. Nor is there an easy way for the public to access this information. Further, renters living on properties with four or fewer units would have to know the last four digits of the owner’s social security number in order to access this information.

In Fort Bend County, we are striving to educate landlords and tenants, provide basic needs assistance, and pass local protections when we can. However, this patchwork of services and orders varies from municipality to municipality and county to county. Unless every jurisdiction is on the same page and reading from the same playbook, confusion, inefficiency, and misinformation will inevitably cause Texans in need to endure unnecessary hardship.

For all of these reasons, I implore you to reconsider the decision to order the lifting of the eviction moratorium and to extend it to July 25 to mirror Congress’ provisions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



KP George  
County Judge of Fort Bend County