

Statement from Scott Kniffen, County Judge released 9/4/20 2:45pm

On Friday, August 28, 2020 a group of concerned parents and interested parties met at the Callahan County Courthouse to discuss the governor's executive order requiring the wearing of face masks. At that meeting, I promised the attendees that I would render a decision today. I heard from people on both sides of the issue, researched the issue further, evaluated the active case trends, and consulted with medical personnel and school officials.

In Callahan County, according to the DSHS, we have maintained fewer than 20 active cases at any point in time throughout this disaster. Masks, while certainly not a "silver bullet" have, I believe, contributed to this but so have the other practices like social distancing and hand sanitizing.

I live, work, shop, and worship in Callahan County. I have observed quite a number of people not wearing masks and our active cases have remained relatively low for the last two months. In an Associated Press article that I read today, new cases, deaths, and hospitalizations across the state are trending lower than they were in July.

Accordingly, today I submitted the appropriate documentation to the state to opt out of the governor's executive order requiring mask wear. I will continue to monitor the active case trends and consult with local officials. If we exceed 20 active cases, we will automatically fall under the governor's executive order.

This does not, in any way, prohibit anyone's individual decision to wear a face mask as part of their effort to avoid illness. Face masks are still part of the overall recommendation by the CDC and I recommend that you wear a mask if you are unable to practice social distancing or unless you fall into one of the other categories found in the governor's order.

This also does not, in any way, prohibit local governments, businesses, schools, churches, or any other organization from requiring the wearing of face masks by customers or attendees at meetings, worship services, or other events. All organizations and businesses may make these decisions on their own or with the appropriate guidance from another authority such as the Texas Education Agency or their corporate owner.

In keeping with the courthouse reopening plan developed by our District Judge, face masks are required in the Callahan County Courthouse if social distancing cannot be maintained or unless you fall into one of the exemptions listed in the governor's executive order.