

SPORTS

A wave of injuries is depleting the Astros' pitching staff.

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CORONAVIRUS

Democrats and Republicans are far apart on an assistance package.

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HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

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Schools ordered closed risk funds

New TEA guidance, Paxton opinion address shutdowns directed by local health officials

By Jacob Carpenter
and Taylor Goldenstein
STAFF WRITERS

AUSTIN — Texas public school districts risk losing state funding if they shut down campuses solely in response to closure orders issued

by local health officials, the Texas Education Agency announced Tuesday, adding another twist to weeks of uncertainty over whether county and city government leaders can issue such orders.

The guidance came hours after Attorney General Ken Paxton re-

leased a letter — which is not legally binding — in which he opined that state law does not allow local health authorities to order the closure of schools as a preemptive measure to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Health officials in all of the state's five largest counties issued closure orders in recent weeks that aimed to keep campuses shuttered through at least Labor Day.



Paxton

Gov. Greg Abbott, who has the power to overrule local closure orders, has not explicitly stated whether he believes local health officials have that power. The TEA's decision, however, renders the local health orders largely moot for public school dis-

tricts that rely on state funding.

For now, the state guidance does not significantly impact districts that have pushed their start date until after Labor Day or those beginning their year with online-only classes, an option available under TEA rules for the first eight weeks of school. Nearly all Houston-area districts are employing those options.

Schools continues on A14

Houston region leads Texas in care facility deaths, cases



Marie D. De Jesús / Staff photographer

Alex Collins, 57, cleans at the Medical Resort at Pearland, which takes in people diagnosed with COVID-19.

By Emily Foxhall,
Jordan Rubio
and John Tedesco
STAFF WRITERS

At one Houston-area nursing home, at least 117 residents had been infected with the new coronavirus. At another, at least 20 residents who tested positive died. At a third, 86 residents were simultaneously sick.

These snapshots emerged from new data released Monday by the state of Texas showing how many residents

New data released by state gives comfort to families barred from visiting loved ones at nursing homes

and staff had been infected with the coronavirus in individual nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The move to disclose the data marked a significant step toward increased transparency that advocates and relatives had long demanded.

The information allows individuals to see how many COVID-19 cases have been de-

Online

» Search our online database of nursing home cases, deaths: houstonchronicle.com/projects/2020/nursing-facilities/

tected in facilities where their relatives live, and it gives the public a more detailed picture of how out-

breaks are spreading among a vulnerable population. One caveat is that some facilities have contracts to accept only COVID-19 patients, so a high number of infections doesn't necessarily indicate that a center has a problem.

Kelley Shannon, executive director of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas, said she was glad to see the numbers released — though she believed it should have happened sooner.

"Families need to be able

Data continues on A14

New DACA applications to be refused

Trump administration cites review of program underway

By Benjamin Wermund
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration announced Tuesday it is rejecting all new applications from would-be Dreamers as it considers trying again to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, just weeks after the Supreme Court blocked Trump's last attempt to kill it.

Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad F. Wolf said the administration is working to "thoughtfully consider the future of the DACA policy, including whether to fully rescind the program."

Officials said the "comprehensive review" will take time, but they would not say how long — leaving it unclear whether the administration would take more steps to end the program ahead of the November elections.

In the meantime, DHS will reject all new DACA applications and will grant renewals for only one year, as opposed to the usual two.

President Donald Trump's new rules
DACA continues on A15

Blood test in reach to spot Alzheimer's

By Pam Belluck
NEW YORK TIMES

A newly developed blood test for Alzheimer's has diagnosed the disease as accurately as methods that are far more expensive or invasive, scientists reported Tuesday, a significant step toward a longtime goal for patients, doctors and dementia researchers. The test has the potential to make diagnosis simpler, more affordable and widely available.

The test determined whether people with dementia had Alzheimer's instead of another condition. And it identified signs of the degenerative, deadly disease 20 years before memory and thinking problems were expected in people with a genetic mutation that causes Alzheimer's, according to research published in JAMA Network Open and presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.

Such a test could be available for clinical use in as little as two to three years, the researchers and other experts estimated, providing a readily accessible way to diagnose whether people with cognitive issues were experiencing Alzheimer's, rather

Alzheimer's continues on A15

Perseverance rover is ready to roll on Mars

By Andrea Leinfelder
STAFF WRITER

NASA's Mars Perseverance rover is set to launch Thursday, carrying a 7-foot-long robotic arm, a tiny helicopter and 43 tubes for collecting rocks as it seeks signs of ancient Martian life while planting seeds for human life on the Red Planet.

Mars 2020 is the first NASA mission specifically designed to search for life (current or ancient) on another planet. It's the first step in returning rock

and soil samples, and it's the first attempt at creating oxygen. The 4-pound helicopter is poised to take humanity's first powered flight on another planet.

Such firsts could aid humans as they seek to create footprints, not just tire marks, on Mars.

"The president gave us an objective to go to Mars with humans," NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine said during a news conference. "To plant an

Rover continues on A14



John Raoux / Associated Press

Alexander Mather of Burke, Va., submitted the winning entry naming the Mars 2020 rover, a model of which is shown.

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