



ABILENE CHAMBER

DAILY BUSINESS BRIEF

Skimming the daily updates for your business so you don't have to.

MANUFACTURING IN TEXAS CITIES CONTINUES TO RECOVER

Texas factory activity continued to expand in July following a record contraction in the spring, according to business executives responding to the Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey. The production index, a key measure of state manufacturing conditions, inched up from 13.6 to 16.1, suggesting a slight pickup in the pace of output growth.

For this month's survey, Texas business executives were asked supplemental questions on the impacts of COVID-19. Results for these questions from the Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey, Texas Service Sector Outlook Survey and Texas Retail Outlook Survey have been released together.

[Read the special questions results.](#)

Texas metropolitan areas added 1,600 manufacturing jobs last month and continued the gradual recovery that commenced in May.

Using Localintel's free and publicly accessible Industry Job Tracker, this report provides 7 observations highlighting changes in manufacturing employment levels for the state's metro areas. At the time of writing, the Tracker draws on the data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as released on July 17, 2020.

[Learn more.](#)

TEXAS RETAIL SALES PLUNGE

Retail sales activity declined sharply in July, according to business executives responding to the Texas Retail Outlook Survey. The sales index, a key measure of state retail activity, plummeted nearly 60 points to -26.7, its weakest reading since April. Nearly half of respondents reported decreased sales compared with June, while just 21 percent reported increases. Inventories continued to fall at a rapid pace, with the inventories index increasing but remaining starkly negative at -21.3.

[Read more.](#)

TEXAS SERVICE SECTOR ACTIVITY DECLINES

Activity in the Texas service sector contracted in July after showing moderate growth in June, according to business executives responding to the Texas Service Sector Outlook Survey. The revenue index, a key measure of state service sector conditions, dropped to

negative territory, falling from 5.7 in June to -8.5 in July.

[Read more.](#)

U.S. SENATE INTRODUCES LIABILITY PROTECTIONS BILL

There is no playbook for dealing with the pandemic. Millions of businesses, schools, nonprofits, and others are navigating an uncertain environment while trying to reopen or stay open without suffering any more economic harm. One challenge they shouldn't worry about is needless lawsuits.

Help could be on the way. Yesterday, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) introduced The SAFE TO WORK Act, which provides the liability protections our country needs. This bill will be part of the Senate's latest legislative response to COVID-19 in the HEALS (Health, Economic, Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools) Act.

The SAFE TO WORK Act will provide timely, targeted, and temporary relief from abusive lawsuits for employers who are following the appropriate health guidelines to keep their employees and customers safe.

What the bill would do:

- Provide temporary lawsuit protections for businesses, schools, colleges, and charities that follow public health guidelines, with exceptions for gross negligence and willful misconduct.
- Protect healthcare workers and medical facilities from needless lawsuits that will impede their ability to provide needed healthcare.
- Extend the PREP Act to include manufacturers of more personal protection equipment and other COVID-related products.
- Provide a national baseline of liability protection without impacting states' abilities to provide stronger protections.
- Ensure that employers who follow applicable government guidelines aren't subject to unfair federal labor and employment lawsuits and enforcement actions.

This is not a partisan issue. Just last week, a bipartisan [coalition](#) of Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives urged congressional leadership to pass common-sense liability protections quickly.

Even a [majority](#) of Americans across the political spectrum agree that such efforts are needed to protect businesses. Nearly two-thirds think Congress should protect businesses from coronavirus-related lawsuits. Majorities of both parties and independents support a variety of protections from virus-related lawsuits.

What's next. Congress must include these important liability protections in its next coronavirus relief package so employers can focus on reigniting the economy and not worry about excessive litigation.

—Harold Kim, President U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform

CHRIS LAMOND TALKS PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FINAL STIMULUS PACKAGE

Priorities

According to Mr. Lamond, the top priorities for Republicans include business liability protections, return to work, stimulus checks to individuals, access to care, and funding for schools. President Trump has also strongly advocated for a payroll tax relief, but his stance has not reached a consensus within the Republican Party. Once the bill is sent to

the House, Lamond says to expect Democrats' priorities to include extending the unemployment insurance program through the year's end, stronger workforce protections, larger stimulus checks to individuals, corporate governance over bailouts, repealing tax reforms, food security, and funding for state and local governments.

Expectations for the Final Bill

Both parties largely agree on extending the Paycheck Protection Program and increasing funding for hospitals. Lamond also indicated that the lion's share of the stimulus will likely go towards vaccine development and the reopening of schools. The Senate is expected to release their version of the bill this afternoon, but it will likely be negotiated and amended by Democrats in the House before it is finalized by its August 7 deadline.

[Watch the full interview.](#)

WHAT WE'RE READING

Virtual school? How 4 startups are seizing the opportunity

"Schools and families are still struggling to adapt to at-home learning. These companies want to ease some of the headaches."

[Read more.](#)

Craddick: Trump's commitment to energy will be on display

"State Rep. Tom Craddick said President Donald Trump will unveil parts of a plan that will demonstrate commitment to a recovery in Texas and across all energy-producing markets."

[Read more.](#)

You don't want to miss these upcoming event for your business.

7/29 GROWING AN INCLUSIVE TEAM An audience-driven discussion designed specifically for the small business community. [Learn more.](#)

7/30 TELECOM RULE IMPACTS ALL CONTRACTS...ARE YOU PREPARED? Have you heard about Section 889 of the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)? The legislation was passed to combat national security and intellectual property threats that face the United States and contains two prohibitions: Part A and Part B. [Learn more.](#)

7/30 SEED TO START OR GROW A BUSINESS: A GUIDE TO SUCCESS Every business starts with a dream. Turning this dream into a reality requires confidence, grit, knowledge, and funding. Wherever you are in growing your business, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has the tools and resources to help you start, grow and expand your business with confidence. [Learn more.](#)

8/5 SBA/FAA VIRTUAL INDUSTRY DAY The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Dallas/Fort Worth District Office teams up with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to bring to the small business community the first SBA/FAA Virtual Industry Day, August 5th, 2020 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. [Learn more.](#)

8/5 HUMANITIES TEXAS GRANTS AND EXHIBITIONS hold a free webinar on grants and exhibitions for Texas cultural and educational organizations. Learn about funding

opportunities, traveling exhibitions, and other resources provided by Humanities Texas. Staff will make brief presentations and then be available for questions and discussion. [Register here.](#)

8/5 BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR AN EVOLVING FUTURE COVID-19 has impacted how we conduct business in many ways. That is why the Governor's Small Business Team will host another webinar focused on helping small businesses develop adaptive strategies for an evolving future. This webinar will help guide business owners and entrepreneurs in implementing solutions, such as e-commerce and online strategies, to maximize business resiliency during uncertain times. [Register here.](#)

8/11 TEXAS ALLIANCE OF ENERGY PRODUCERS SUMMER CONFERENCE join this FREE webinar on Tuesday, August 11 at 2:00 pm to hear from distinguished energy professionals on issues important to you and your company. [Register here.](#)

8/13 GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING VIRTUAL LUNCHEON PANEL DISCUSSION discussion about government contracting for Women-Owned Small Businesses. [Learn more.](#)

MORE FROM THE CHAMBER:

- [Year One](#)
- [Your Chamber Commitment for Fall Events](#)
- [Free Mask Poster for Chamber Members](#)
- [Abilene Chamber Now Seeking Nominations for Citizen of the Year](#)
- [Update your newsletter preferences](#)
- [Hiring? Add your job to AbileneWorks.com for free](#)
- [Previous Business Briefs](#)

[LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Member Directory](#)

[Update your email preferences](#)