



## **Austin Landline Report October 2017**

After some high level negotiations, Gov. Abbott will release \$50 million in emergency funding to Houston for hurricane clean-up. Hit areas of the coast are still struggling to recover from the massive damage.

Billy Moore with Vianovo provided the following information on redistricting:

A three-judge panel ruled over the summer that 2 of Texas' 36 congressional districts and 9 of the 150 Texas House of Representatives districts were drawn by Republicans to unconstitutionally discriminate against minority voters, who tend to vote for Democrats. The United States Supreme Court has put both rulings on hold in order to review the cases. The high court turned down a petition for quick resolution of the congressional dispute last week.

As a result of the court's decision, procedures for the March 6, 2018 primary election will continue on schedule. Candidates can begin to file for a place on the ballot on November 11, 2017; the last day to file is December 11th.

It is almost certain that the Supreme Court will hear the case after the primary and could issue a decision later this summer. Should they uphold the rulings of the three-judge panel, by no means a foregone conclusion, there is precedent for requiring that new maps be drawn and new primary elections be held in the fall.

A similar situation occurred in 1996 when district maps were held unconstitutional and special primary elections were held in 13 Texas congressional districts. The process repeated itself in 2006 when 3 districts were thrown out and new primary elections were held.

Should that occur, the district lines would be short-lived. New statewide district lines are due to be drawn in 2021 when the 2020 Census is available. Any new districts required by a court ruling would only be valid for elections in 2018 and 2020.

In addition, the Supreme Court will hear arguments Monday on a Wisconsin redistricting case in which a district court held that the states' maps were drawn so favorably for Republicans that they violated the constitutional rights of Democratic voters.