

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Beach Safety and Rip Current Awareness Month Begins

**(CORPUS CHRISTI)** – Texas is recognizing Beach Safety and Rip Current Awareness Month throughout April as a result of legislation authored last year by State Rep. Todd Hunter of Corpus Christi.

Rep. Hunter passed House Concurrent Resolution 46 to raise awareness of beach safety and help visitors to Texas beaches better understand the dangers of rip currents, which are powerful, narrow channels of fast-moving water that flow outward to sea.

“We want to continue to draw visitors to our wonderful beach communities and we also want to make sure that the public has the information needed to enjoy our beaches safely,” Rep. Hunter said. “The month of April presents a great opportunity to educate our fellow Texans so they can fully enjoy our beaches this spring and summer.”

Rip currents have an average speed of around one to two feet per second, but some can be as fast as eight feet per second. Many swimmers are caught off guard by the sensation of being pulled out to sea and react by attempting to swim directly to shore, putting themselves at risk of exhaustion and drowning. Signs that a rip current may be present include a break in the wave pattern, a visible channel of choppy, churning water, a line of foam or debris moving seaward, and a difference in the color of water.

In April 2019, 18-year-old Je’Sani Smith was swept away by a rip current at Whitecap Beach in Corpus Christi. Although he was a great athlete and swimmer, the rip current was stronger.

In Je’Sani’s memory, his parents, Kiwana and Terry Denson, created the Je’Sani Smith Foundation to carry their son’s legacy and help spread the message about the dangers of coastal hazards in hopes to save lives. The foundation is designed to provide education, awareness, and water skills training on beach safety, seaward-flowing water currents, and other coastal hazards.

“Throughout April, we are going to focus on raising awareness of beach safety,” Rep. Hunter said. “I also want to encourage our community to share ideas about beach safety that we should consider in the next legislative session. With greater awareness, we can make our beaches even more enjoyable for Coastal Bend residents and all who visit.”

Area business leaders also expressed the importance of Beach Safety and Rip Current Awareness Month:

- “Educating visitors about beach safety and the dangers of rip currents can only enhance their Corpus Christi experience.” — **John La Rue, President and CEO of the United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce.**
- “Our beach is such an important factor in our visitor experience as well as to residents. People love the sun, the sea breeze, and the water. We take pride in having a safe and clean beach and are proud to hold the distinction of the Clean Beaches Council as the first Blue Wave Beach in Texas. It is therefore extremely important that we keep our

beaches safe and secure.” — **Diane Probst, President/CEO of the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce.**

- “As a growing family beach destination, we continue to communicate the importance of beach safety in Port Aransas. We’ll be launching some Port Aransas specific messages to our guests and working with our amazing team of lifeguards in Port Aransas to ensure the safest experience as possible. Knowing what to do if caught in a rip current, swimming near a lifeguard and many other tips will be a part of our efforts to support swimming in the Texas Gulf.” — **Brett Stawar, President of the Port Aransas Tourism Bureau & Chamber of Commerce.**

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**About Rep. Todd Hunter**

Todd Hunter is the state representative for Texas House District 32 in Nueces County. He is the Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee. He is also a member of the State Affairs Committee, which deals with significant matters of state policy, ranging from the administration of the state government to cybersecurity, and he sits on the International Relations & Economic Development Committee.

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