

April 2, 2017

To all of the friends , family and patrons of Hill Top Café,

We have had an amazing run here up on the hill for the last 36 years. Through all the great food, music, friendships, and also the tough times and tragedies Hill Top has always been an oasis, both from a culinary and musical standpoint. While there have been many ups and downs in slowly but surely building Hill Top into a world-renowned establishment, we now face a threat that is beyond our control—something we can't fix with hard work and creativity. This threat is from our own government, specifically the EPA and the TCEQ, and it is real- we may be forced out of business without your help and support and the arousal of public outcry.

We have been fighting the TCEQ for two years now, ever since they informed us we were a "public water system" per EPA regulations and attempted to take over our well and force us to chlorinate our beautiful Edwards Aquifer spring water. Why, you might ask? For no reason, whatsoever—we have never had a problem in 36 years with our water or any other aspect of public health and safety.

The TCEQ and the EPA have been attempting to force us to hire their engineering firms to design chlorination systems, reverse osmosis systems, well and pumping modifications etc., and take over our water. This is all at tremendous expense which we simply cannot afford (somewhere in the neighborhood of \$60,000) with ongoing book keeping and testing expenses. Again, bear in mind that we have beautiful, safe water from the bottom of our well to all points where the water comes out of the taps. All parts of our system exceed county and state water quality codes.

We have been forced to spend thousands of dollars fighting these bureaucrats. We are currently in the TCEQ enforcement stage and they have turned the Hill Top matter over to the Attorney General's office which is now threatening to seize our bank accounts if we don't pay thousands of dollars in fines and penalties . We are preparing to file a federal court lawsuit to challenge the constitutionality of the federal and state regulations that declare Hill Top Café to be a "public water system." We are fighting on principle and for our very survival.

We are all for a clean and safe environment, but that is NOT what these regulations are about—they are flawed and dangerous and need to be struck down or amended. We hope that our lawsuit will do just that.

We ask you now to help us in any way you can, and here are several options:

1. Donate to the Hill Top Café legal defense fund. Our goal is to raise \$35,000. It could cost a lot more if it goes full circle but hopefully if enough people express

outrage and get our legislator's attention, a common-sense solution will arise. We would much rather be cooking great food and enjoying good Texas music.

2. Call your local, state and federal representatives and voice your outrage and concern that your tax dollars are being used to harass and threaten Hill Top's (and other small businesses') existence for no practical or logical reason.

3. Come by Hill Top and sign the petition that we have started –spread the word to your friends and neighbors.

All the best, and please help us keep this beautiful Texas landmark alive.

Sincerely,

Johnny, Willie and Alex Nicholas and the Hill Top staff.