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RELATIONS

AIA - Week 11

As we all adjust to the new normal of social distancing and working remotely, we will continue to send you reports as to the response of the state to the Coronavirus pandemic. We will also be providing you with up to the minute alerts as we hear any information on the conclusion of the 2020 legislative session.

On a conference call we participated in this week, Senator David Perdue addressed a group of elected officials and members of the business community urging everyone not to panic but to take this very seriously. He offered positive news in noting that 95% of factories in China have reopened. He also spoke about the \$1 trillion federal stimulus package - the vote has failed twice and the package will be revamped. One important point that Senator Perdue made was that the United States needs to move towards a phase of conducting business but with safety precautions.

State response

Beginning on March 14th, Governor Kemp issued a series of executive orders. Below is the timeline.

March 14th - Governor Kemp issues executive order declaring a public health state of emergency in Georgia for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 16th - Governor Kemp closes all schools until March 31st to slow the spread of COVID-19

March 20th - Governor Kemp issues an executive order to reduce regulations to assist the state's response to the spread of COVID-19

**See below for more on this order*

March 20th - Governor Kemp authorizes a transfer of \$19M from the Governor's Emergency Fund

March 20th - Department of Insurance Commissioner John King issues a directive directing, among other things, health insurance plans to not cancel policies. You can find the directive here: <https://www.oci.ga.gov/ExternalResources/Announcements/Directive-3202020-1057.pdf>

March 23rd - Governor Kemp issues an executive order to expand temporary licensing of certain medical professionals

**See below for more on this order*

March 23rd - Governor Kemp issues an executive order ordering “medically fragile” individuals to shelter in place as well as the closing of bars and nightclubs throughout the state. He ordered a ban on gatherings of over 10 people unless at least 6 feet apart. Additionally, the order authorizes DPH to close any business or establishment for non-compliance with safety mandates. The order is in place until April 6th.

Executive order reducing regulations

There are many provisions to the 5-page executive order issued on March 20th to reduce necessary regulations that will assist the state’s response to COVID-19. Below are some of the highlights. This order will be in effect until the Governor determines termination is imminent.

Pharmacists are permitted to dispense a 90-day supply of a prescription drug in the event that the patient has no remaining refills and the pharmacist is unable to contact the issuing practitioner to obtain refill authorization. Pharmacists may also dispense early refills for prescriptions. The Board of Pharmacists is also authorized to grant temporary licenses to pharmacists that apply for a temporary license and is currently licensed in good standing in another state. These are all important provisions that will aid in protecting Georgians from this virus and help maintain seamless treatment for those already seeking treatment for other ailments.

Due to limited staffing and increased wait times, Governor Kemp permits all applicants seeking plan review or inspections within a municipality or county in Georgia to immediately retain a private professional to provide the required plan review or inspection. Current law already provides for this alternative but requires a waiting period of 30 days. This waiting period would be waived. This is important to keep city, county and state business moving even with the focus of staff being on public health.

If you would like any additional information on this order you can find it [here](#)

Executive order furthering Coronavirus aide

This order deals with expanding the medical response to patients with Coronavirus. The order allows the Georgia Board of Nursing to grant temporary licenses to practice to graduate registered nurses and graduate practical nurses who have yet to take their respective licensing exam. They must work under licensed registered or practical nurses. This is unprecedented yet will play a critical part in helping to treat patients. Note that this

does not expand the scope of these nurses, only allows trained professionals temporary licensing.

If you would like any additional information on this order you can find it [here](#)

Other news

There is really not a lot going on in the world of politics and government that does not involve the Coronavirus and the response but we will continue to include other newsworthy items.

One hot topic coming into the 2020 legislative session was the emission of ethylene oxide from plants in Georgia. The plants have been shut down but there were efforts to lobby the state to re-open them as well as lobbyists fighting to keep them closed indefinitely. Well, that indefinite time may have come. Ethylene oxide is the key chemical in the process of sterilizing medical equipment. The FDA has asked Cobb County and the state to work with Sterigenics and re-open to assist in the fight against COVID-19. While county leadership has seemingly agreed, some Commissioners have come out strongly against the agreement.

As we continue to navigate this situation, we will not stop working to protect your interests at the state and local level. It is evident that we will be operating under these established conditions for the foreseeable future but that does not mean that the state and local governments will not be working. We will meet remotely, we will schedule conference calls, we will social distance but we will get things done!