



**The American
Institute
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PGR | PEACHTREE
GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS

AIA - Week 12

The US has been in varying levels of quarantine now for well over two weeks. We want to continue to keep you up to speed on what is happening in regards to the Georgia legislature and Georgia's response to the Coronavirus.

We still have no news on when the legislature will resume, however there has been a call within the last week to postpone the May general primary. The presidential primary originally scheduled for March 27th has already been postponed to coincide with the May 19th general primary. Speaker Ralston has spoken out indicating that he believes the May 19th primary should also be postponed since the state will likely still be under a state of emergency and holding the election could put elderly poll workers at risk.

Earlier this week, we participated in a call with Labor Commissioner Mark Butler where he went over how to handle applying for unemployment including who is eligible and how to access details on hiring practices and other funds. If you would like more information from the call, you can view the notes at https://www.gachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/032620_GDoLnewrulesrelease.pdf

Schools:

On April 1st Governor Kemp extended the closure of all schools K-12 for the rest of the school year. In accordance with this announcement, the State Board of Education has issued a series of waivers giving flexibility to school systems to work under the executive order. Requirements such as teacher evaluation, class size, teacher certification, expenditure controls, seat time, and student assessment can be waived. Statutes can utilize these waivers without amending their flexibility contracts with the state. Georgia has been given preliminary authorization to waive certain federal requirements. We will await final approval.

Telehealth:

The Georgia Department of Community Health is waiving some Medicaid telehealth and telemedicine policies as well. They eliminate the limitations on the originating site. Telehealth services are now allowed to be provided via phone or use of some sort of webcam. Communication should still be secure and meet all HIPPA requirements. These services are allowed if the service is considered medically necessary and if the patient initiates the services and consents to the virtual treatment. This must be documented in the medical record as well. All other telehealth laws and regulations must be followed.

New Executive Orders:

Governor Kemp is issuing Executive Orders on a nearly daily basis to keep up with the ever-changing environment during the Coronavirus pandemic. On March 30th Governor Kemp issued an order amending a previous order allowing third party inspections to include other types of projects. On April 2nd he put forth a shelter in place order currently set to expire on April 13th. We have outlined the major points of each order below.

March 30th order:

This order expands the previous order allowing immediate private provider review to also include hospitals, ambulatory health care centers, nursing homes, jails, penal institutions, airports, buildings or structures that impact national or state homeland security or any building defined as a high-rise building. This is important in continuing to fight COVID-19 in that these types of projects are critical during this time and demand timely construction.

April 2nd order:

This order is substantial in that it is the most comprehensive and strict order yet and it supersedes all orders previously put forth by various local governments. The order instructs Georgians to remain in their place of residence unless performing essential activities. The order is reflective of what many local governments had already done by executive order but the uniform policy will be helpful in curbing confusion.

The main points include:

The closing of non-essential businesses such as bars, nightclubs, gyms, fitness centers, bowling alleys, theaters, live performance venues, operators of amusement parks, dine-in services at restaurants and private social clubs, estheticians, hair designers, body art studios, beauty shops and salons, barber shops, cosmetology schools, hair design schools, barbering schools, esthetics schools, nail care schools, and massage therapists.

Other entities may continue to operate while adhering to other restrictions including social distancing and certain hygiene regulations. If you are considered critical infrastructure, those restrictions can vary.

You are not required to shelter in place if you are engaging in essential services, working in critical infrastructure, engaging in minimum basic operations and performing necessary travel.

You are not required to shelter in place in the face of an emergency and for health and exercise in that you are practicing social guidelines.

All other guidelines from previous orders are included. These include the regulations on gatherings to less than ten people and you should maintain a distance of six feet between yourself and other people.

Here is a link to the order: <https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2020-executive-orders>

Here is a link to the explanation: <https://gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2020-04-02/governor-kemp-issues-shelter-place-order>

Federal Resources:

In response to the negative economic impact of COVID-19, the US congress has passed a stimulus package to help individuals and small businesses. In this, the government allowed economic impact payments to be sent to individuals. You can find information on who will qualify for the payments <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know> During this time, the Federal Trade Commission is warning about many scams that are out there during this time. To learn about scams or to file a complaint, you can visit their website at <https://www.ftc.gov/coronavirus>

Other news

There is still not a lot of news aside from the Coronavirus response and the many different policies that have been set in place. Last week we mentioned the potential opening of the sterigenics plant in Cobb County. Early this week, the plant was reopened through an executive order from Chairman Mike Boyce. It was reopened to assist in sterilizing medical equipment to fight the virus. This is a temporary opening but it has caused an uproar in the community.

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!