



**The American
Institute
of Architects**



AIA- Week 13

We are in week four of quarantine for the COVID-19 virus and yet it was another busy week in the world of Georgia politics. Through this pandemic situation we are participating in back to back conference calls all week to stay up to date on the information coming from the Governor, the legislature, agency heads, chambers and other state leaders.

Executive Orders and Actions

On April 8th Governor Kemp extended the state's public health emergency until May 13th and the stay at home order until April 30th. In addition, he issued a number of executive orders he believes will continue to fight the spread of COVID-19.

The main points of each are as follows:

Short term rentals -

Governor Kemp issued an order restricting vacation rentals by owner through April 30th. He indicated that local officials believe Georgia was becoming a "vacation destination." This order excludes hotels.

Nursing home / Assisted living home best practices -

The Governor issued an order mandating more aggressive actions at nursing homes and assisted living facilities. This is due to a spike in deaths at these locations. Restrictions call for locating affected residents with only other affected residents, wearing the appropriate eye gear, adhering to strict sanitation measures, limiting visitors and others. The order also mandates that residents only be transferred to a hospital if medically necessary and not upon diagnosis.

In the Governor's press conference, he addressed unemployment challenges facing many Georgians. The Governor said that the Department of Labor received more claims last week than they did the entire previous year. The Governor said the Department led by Commissioner Mark Butler is working around the clock to gather the necessary information and process claims. He urged Georgians to have faith and patience.

Department of Education

We participated on a phone call with State School Superintendent Richard Woods on Tuesday. The Superintendent first pointed us all to a website with the most up to date information regarding the efforts of the Department of Education during this unprecedented time for Georgia schools. The site is <https://www.georgiainsights.com/coronavirus.html>.

Woods was asked about the disproportionate effect the closing of schools is having on the low-income student population. Woods acknowledged that as one of the most critical issues in this fight. Distance learning is very difficult for students without access to a device and/or the internet. He indicated that the DOE is working to get devices into the hands of all students through working with local systems and implementing funding through the CARES act. School systems are also using alternatives to computers such as packets and other resources.

When asked about getting food to students who count on the schools for food Woods indicated that the local districts are handling this distribution and that they have not missed a beat. This was a top priority for schools and they understand the sense of dependence some students have on schools. Some districts have pick-up locations at schools and some are delivering meals through the buses at bus stops.

The school calendar is probably the biggest unknown at this point. Some districts are planning to end school early and then begin early while others are not and others are undecided. The Department is looking at the best option statewide as well as options for assessments in order to correctly place students for the next school year.

Hospital Responses

In a call with top hospital officials throughout Georgia we were able to get a strong sense of where we are and where we are going in terms of flattening the curve and treating COVID-19 in Georgia. These folks on the front lines gave us insight into what it looks like in a hospital.

Leo Reichert, General Counsel with Wellstar, led off by explaining that all Wellstar hospitals have plans to expand ICU capacity. He addressed testing of COVID-19 and said that rapid testing in house and shorter turnaround times for results is helping us to identify the number of cases and identify the impact.

Rob Schreiner, also with Wellstar, gave us all hope in that he indicated the curve is flattening. He said the social distancing Georgians are practicing is working. Wellstar is

working to maintain a comfortable capacity by implementing video appointments - they are seeing up to 2000 patients per day by video. Schreiner voiced that experts are working day and night to create a vaccine for this virus and that is what will ultimately stop the spread entirely.

Other officials on the call were representatives from North Fulton Hospital, Atlanta Medical Center, Fulton County Board of Health, Kennestone Medical Center, Cobb Hospital, Cobb/Douglas Board of Health, Cherokee County and Northwest Georgia Health System. Everyone echoed Schreiner in that social distancing and aggressive health practices is working to flatten the curve. They all are in agreement that additional testing is needed and all are working all angles to source additional tests. One of the themes that continued to be brought up is the outpouring of support from each community. Communities have stepped up to support healthcare workers, patients and volunteers with donations, food and encouragement.

Elections

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger has pushed back the May 19th primary election. The presidential and general primary election will be held on June 9th. The Secretary of State indicated the health risk is too high for early voting to begin in late April. The pressure from Georgia's congressional delegation and other state leaders has been mounting to move the election over the past couple weeks. The Secretary of State did not have the power to move the election until the Governor extended the state of emergency and the shelter in place order on Wednesday.

State Senator Jack Hill

In devastating news this week, Georgia lost an leader in the State Senate. Senator Jack Hill from Reidsville passed away on Tuesday. Senator Hill was the longest serving Senator - sworn in in 1991. Senator Hill was the Chairman of the powerful Appropriation Committee. Senator Hill will be sorely missed.

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 at <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>.

Thank you!

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!