



**The American  
Institute  
of Architects**



### **AIA - Week 14**

As we continue to work through this COVID-19 pandemic situation, everything is changing by the hour. We will continue to update you and stay up to date on all the resources available to you and your business and keep you apprised of legislative actions.

#### **Executive Presentations and Actions**

Governor Kemp held a press conference on Monday, April 13th. At this conference he began by addressing the storms that occurred in Georgia on Sunday. The storms left extensive damage across northwest Georgia. The Governor declared an additional state of emergency for the damage allowing the state to allocate funds to clean-up and damage and receive FEMA funding.

In addressing the current state of the COVID-19 situation, the Governor focused on the expansion of Georgia's healthcare facility capacity in anticipation of an expected surge. He announced the use of the Georgia World Congress Center as an alternative care facility. In part due to some incidents over confusing enforcement measures in Atlanta, Governor Kemp issued an executive order suspending enforcement of Georgia's anti-mask statute. This is to ensure everyone can safely wear masks in public to protect themselves.

Governor Kemp indicated that social distancing measures are working and that, while the numbers are still going up, we are seeing some flattening in the curve. The new peak date in Georgia is set for April 26th. This has changed a number of times, so we anticipate this is an estimation.

#### **Ethics Commission decision**

As you know, the Georgia legislature adjourned on March 13th after the 29th legislative day. They adjourned with no date set to reconvene. The Lt. Governor and the Speaker left the statement broad in indicating that they will determine when the legislature will reconvene when it is prudent and safe. On Tuesday, the Ethics Commission met to address how the suspension of the legislative session affects a legislator's ability to fundraise and campaign.

Georgia bans legislators from raising money while they are in legislative session. This is becoming a concern to legislators who have a primary given that the primary is on June 9th

and the current public health emergency declaration runs through May 13th. For legislators with primary opposition that gives them only three weeks to raise money and campaign to defend their seats. Some legislators had suggested that they be able to raise funds while in this period of an indefinite suspension.

After over an hour of discussion and deliberations, the ethics commission voted 3-2 to uphold the ban on fundraising. We believe this will help determine when the legislature will reconvene. The one requirement of the legislature before they adjourn sine die is to pass a state budget. Legislators have not done that yet in 2020.

### **Election news**

As we mentioned last week, Senator Jack Hill passed unexpectedly on April 6th. Governor Kemp declared the special election for Senate District 4 to be held on June 9th alongside the general primary election. This will be a nonpartisan race. At the close of qualifying on Wednesday, five candidates had qualified to run.

These candidates are:

Dr. Scott Bohlke - a family practice doctor from Brooklet

Bill Hickman - a CPA from Statesboro

Kathy Palmer - an attorney from Swainsboro

Neil Singleton - a retired Army veteran from Collins

Stephen Sammons - a law student from Emanuel County

The State Elections Board met on Wednesday and voted unanimously to allow Georgia voters to turn in their absentee ballots at drop boxes. Boxes will be set up on designated state property before June 9th. This option enables voters to submit their absentee ballots without having to pay for postage or hand them directly to election workers which avoids human contact during the pandemic.

### **Updates from Governor's Office**

On Thursday, the Governor's Office held a call with members of the General Assembly, giving them a weekly update on what the office is doing to help protect Georgians from the Coronavirus. One of the biggest takeaways from the call is that the office has not ordered all businesses to shut down. In fact, businesses can remain open if they adhere to the 20 safety guidelines. Those can be found at <https://www.georgia.org/covid19bizguide>. Dr. Toomey was on the call and gave an update on testing and data around the state. She said the restrictions on who can get tested have loosened and now anyone who is experiencing symptoms may get tested with a physician referral. She also said that while the data is slow to collect, it is very accurate and more partnerships with testing companies are forming. They are working on collecting more specific data related to demographics. The Governor's office confirmed they are working with the Lt. Governor's office and the Speaker's office for initial considerations on when to reopen the state's economy.

## **Legislative Study Committee**

The Speaker announced on Wednesday that a study committee had formed with the purpose of looking at when the House should reconvene for session and what the protocols will look like. The memo with the study committee members is attached.

## **Opening back up for business**

In hopeful news, President Trump released guidelines for reopening the Country. The guidelines can be found here <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>. We have also attached the document. These guidelines are set in three phases to continue protection of the most vulnerable and to mitigate the threat of a resurgence. Reopening is determined on a county by county or state by state basis at the Governor's discretion.

State's must show a downward trajectory in the illness for a 14 day period to be considered ready to reopen. The State's hospitals must also be able to treat all patients without crisis care.

As you can see in the linked document, reopening occurs in three stages. Each stage provides guidelines for individuals, employers and specific types of employers. These specific employers include long term care facilities, gyms, bars, large venue operations and elective surgery facilities. and others. Along with the phases to reopen the document provides long-term guidelines to be followed by individuals and employers. These include sanitation practices, encouraging social distancing measures, encouraging teleworking and others that will become a part of everyday life in America for the foreseeable future.

While we do not have a timeline for reopening Georgia at this time, we hope to see Georgia reaching the criteria to phase in very soon!

## **Resources**

We have been staying up-to-date on all the loans and the makeup of the stimulus packages. We hope you will contact us with any specific questions you may have in navigating through government processes. This site has ample information on what is available to you and we have found it to be very informative.

<https://sites.selectgeorgia.com/georgia-business-resources-covid-19-relief/general-business-information/>

In regards to qualifying for the stimulus funds, 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. To learn about scams or to file a complaint, you can visit their website at <https://www.ftc.gov/coronavirus>

Additionally, the Federal Reserve announced a new Municipal Liquidity Facility for state and local governments. For more information, visit

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/files/monetary20200409a3.pdf>.

**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!