



**The American
Institute
of Architects**



AIA- Week 15

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 20th. At this press conference, Governor Kemp surprised even his own Coronavirus Task Force (<https://www.aic.com/blog/politics/members-kemp-coronavirus-task-force-didn-know-about-his-order-reopen-businesses/pRXy3myfIP1jd8pn3gMfLJ/>) in announcing plans to follow federal guidelines (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>) and begin phase one of opening the State of Georgia up for business. As is to be expected, the Governor has received criticism and praise for this decision. Governor Kemp indicated that numbers show a plateau in the surge of Coronavirus cases across Georgia and that increased hospital capacity will enable patients to safely be treated for the virus. He also announced a partnership with Augusta Medical Center and other private groups that greatly increases testing ability in Georgia.

The executive order allows the following businesses to open up on Friday, April 24th. These businesses must adhere to strict social distancing and sterilization measures.

- Gyms and fitness centers
- Bowling alleys
- Body art studios
- Barbers
- Cosmetologists
- Hair designers
- Nail care artists
- Estheticians
- Massage therapists

Bars, nightclubs, amusement parks and live performance venues must remain closed for the time being.

In a separate order, the Governor announced another series of businesses that may reopen on Monday, April 27th. These include restaurants, theaters and private social clubs. As with the previous order, these establishments must comply with lengthy social distancing and sanitation mandates. Many restaurants have chosen to remain closed until they reach a higher comfort level with the slowing of the virus' spread and many are scrambling to find the necessary supplies to comply with the 39 standards set in the order so they can open their doors on Monday. In addition to outlining social distancing standards and practices for businesses now allowed to reopen, Governor Kemp included new standards for grocery stores, which have been considered essential and have remained open. You can find the executive order with all the requirements here: <https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2020-executive-orders>

In addition to these orders, the Governor encouraged Georgians who fall under the "medically fragile" category to continue to shelter in place. Both orders also indicate that local governments shall not pass orders more or less restrictive than those put forth by the Governor.

Political landscape

Following the Governor's order to begin to reopen, he immediately faced criticism from other elected officials across the state and nation. While many Republican members of the state legislature expressed their support for the decision, many democrats expressed that they believe the decision to reopen is coming too soon. There were mixed reviews from local officials across the state. On Wednesday, at his press briefing, President Trump indicated that he disagrees with the decision for Georgia to reopen at this time (<https://www.ajc.com/blog/politics/too-soon-trump-urges-kemp-reverse-coronavirus-rollback/bUQsnksgvm8vmrTQonrNtK/>). Many have called for Kemp to rescind his order however he has declined to do so.

Hospitals weigh in

This week, WellStar shared an update on the status of their hospitals and their thoughts on the Governor's decision to reopen the state. WellStar indicated they are well prepared and have been transporting ventilators between hospitals as needed. Testing is continuing to be widely available. According to The Department of Health for Cobb and Douglas County, testing time for both of their drive-through testing sites are down to a minute and 45 seconds, which allows for more daily testing. The National Guard has continued to be a great resource for the state. They are helping in long-term facilities and anywhere else that is needing aid. WellStar said they have staff that are being trained and are prepared to help if needed. Overall, the hospitals were supportive of the Governor's decision. They feel they are prepared and are also happy about getting to perform elective medical procedures again. Some hospitals even indicated they believe they already hit their peak.

Call with Attorney General

We participated in a chairman's circle meeting with Attorney General Chris Carr on Thursday of this week. Carr indicated his strong support of the Governor's orders to reopen the state. He indicated that he believes Trump and Kemp share the same philosophies but potentially not the same timeline. He believes that the two will come together as we continue to watch the numbers.

The Attorney General spoke about the different issues that have been unique to his office during this public health emergency. One issue he mentioned is price gouging. There are many different items in this realm that are not usually included. Typically it is gas or food. While certain foods have been an issue, other items such as toilet paper, hand sanitizer, water and others are the main sources of the problem during this time. In addition to price gouging, hoarding of many of these same items is also an issue.

He spoke about scams that are running rampant. Carr said there have been thousands of scams that have been uncovered. Most of these scams are targeting financial investments, fraudulent banking, and attempts to access stimulus funds.

Carr discussed liability in the return to life as normal. The Governor has issued additional liability coverage to medical professionals during the state of emergency but it currently does not extend beyond that. He said that he does have concerns about some trial attorneys and others taking advantage of the situation but we are not sure yet how that will play out. It will have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

When asked about how the legislature will handle the rest of the session Carr indicated he did not know the plan. He said that there has been a huge budgetary impact and the legislature will have a big job ahead of them. He said he is preparing for additional cuts at the Department of Law and he's sure others are doing the same.

Return of the State Legislature

As we have previously reported, officials have not yet announced when the Legislature will return to wrap up the 2020 Legislative Session. The Legislature must pass a budget by July 1st.

While we have heard many rumors on the possible date, yesterday, the Speaker sent a letter to members of the House announcing his recommendation for returning to session on June 11th. This would be just two days after the primary election. We will continue to follow this closely and will announce any official decisions.

Election news

As we mentioned last week, campaigns are ramping up across the state. Candidates, both incumbents and challengers, began to put up yard signs and reach out to voters. The Ethics Commission denied a request last week to allow legislators to fundraise during the suspension of the legislature so many incumbents will be beginning their campaigns on a tighter budget than usual.

This week, we added one legislator to the list of those not returning next year. Representative Vernon Jones announced his resignation. Jones, a democrat, recently

endorsed President Donald Trump as his choice for President in 2020 and created political upheaval which ultimately led to his resignation. (<https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/georgia-democratic-lawmaker-announces-resignation-week-after-endorsing-trump/vOcyL9hiN7Dnf1G3K3A1I/>). Jones initially indicated he would not finish his term set to expire in November but later said support from constituents convinced him to finish his term yet not seek a new one.

Federal Funding

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 which individuals and businesses will qualify for the payments at

<https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus-tax-relief-and-economic-impact-payments>

During this time, the Federal Trade Commission is warning about many scams. To learn about coronavirus-related scams or to file a complaint, you can visit their website at <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/coronavirus-scams-what-ftc-doing>

Additionally, the federal reserve announced a Municipal Liquidity Facility for state and local governments. For more information, visit <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/files/monetary20200409a3.pdf>

Yesterday, Congress voted to approve another relief package for \$484 billion. The funds will replenish the initial small business relief package, along with going to help hospitals and fund more testing. For more information, visit <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2020-04-23/house-passes-484-billion-in-small-business-hospital-relief-funding>

Thank you!

As we navigate this situation into the next phases, we will not stop working to protect your interests at the state and local level. While we see light at the end of the tunnel, it is clear that we will not return to normalcy for some time. We will continue to meet remotely and social distance but we will get things done!