



**The American
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GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS

AIA - Week 16

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 Actions

Thursday, Governor Kemp signed an executive order extending the State of Emergency through June 12th. Although the shelter-in-place expired for most Georgians last night, Kemp also extended the shelter-in-place for the medically fragile. This includes people age 65 and older, people living in nursing homes/long-term care facilities, people with chronic lung disease, people with moderate to severe asthma, people with severe heart disease, people who are immunocompromised, people with class III or severe obesity, and people with diabetes, liver disease, or chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis. Anyone who fits any of these criteria are to shelter in place until June 12th.

Executive Presentations

Governor Kemp held a press conference on Monday of this week. This is becoming a regularly scheduled program. He spoke out the strides Georgia has made in testing and hospital capacity. Governor Kemp highlighted the new COVID-19 dashboard which is helping in identifying hot spots, at risk populations and other key statistics. The Governor spoke about the power of telemedicine in the fight against COVID-19. The Governor indicated that we are armed and ready with testing and facilities and it's time for more Georgians to utilize these resources.

The Governor informed us that there are 1000 ventilators in use across Georgia with 1800 available. There are only nine patients recovering at the GWCC facility. This is great news for our capacity issue – in this area Georgia is prepared for any surge. Governor Kemp spoke about lifting restrictions on businesses – he said that he has been working with the federal government and other data sources to be sure the trends are in our favor and we are making smart decisions for Georgians.

Kemp said that state patrol officers are enforcing the new requirements on businesses that are reopening. They have received very few calls and the ones that they have answered deal mainly with large gatherings. He said that enforcement at this point is education.

In addressing President Trump's recent criticism of Kemp's decision to reopen certain businesses Kemp said that he and the President share a common goal in protecting the lives and livelihoods of Georgians. They have spoken and are working out their differences. Kemp calls for renewed unity in Georgia. He recognizes that there are different opinions about how to move forward but he said there is one goal – to emerge from this pandemic safe and strong physically, mentally and economically.

State Budget

Amid the Coronavirus crisis, the Governor's office made it clear that there were going to have to be serious reductions in the budget. They stated these cuts may be even worse than the 2008 recession. The Governor is working with the House and Senate Appropriations Committee on appropriate cuts. Today, the House and Senate Appropriations chairs sent a letter to state agencies requesting they cut their budgets for FY 2021 by 14%. They are asked to send in their proposed budget by May 20th.

Covid-19 Testing Updates

Testing availability is expanding to all Georgians who have symptoms along with first responders, medical workers, law enforcement, or long-term care facility employees and residents who may be asymptomatic. According to the CDC, symptoms may include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. To find a testing site near you, visit https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-19-testing-site?utm_source=Gimme+Shelter+-+GaPundit+for+April+29%2C+2020&utm_campaign=GaPundit+Todd+Rehm+Georgia+Politics+04202015&utm_medium=email.

GEMA Update

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency gave an update yesterday on what they have seen and done in response to the state's coronavirus outbreak. They announced to-date they have distributed over 2 million N95 masks and over 3 million surgical masks along with 200,000 gowns, 500,000 face shields, and 5.7 million latex gloves. They also announced a new decontamination system by Batelle. This system can decontaminate 80,000 N95 masks daily and is fully operational as of Wednesday. 95 organizations have already signed up to utilize the system.

Bill signing

In the midst of the coronavirus chaos, Governor Kemp signed an important piece of legislation that will have a major impact on the budget moving forward. Bert Reeves' HB 444 dealing with changes to the dual enrollment program in Georgia was signed on Tuesday, April 28th. It limits state funded dual enrollment courses to core courses and eligible career technical and agricultural education courses – excluding fine arts, electives

and physical education. The University system offers more than 2000 courses that meet eligible core criteria. The bill also caps dual enrollment hours at 30 and limits dual enrollment to eleventh and twelfth grade students with a limited allowance made for some tenth graders. Certain tenth graders are limited to courses at technical schools only unless they qualify for the state's Zell Miller scholarship requiring them to maintain a 3.7 grade point average or better. Note that the bill does not prevent students from taking additional dual enrollment courses at their own expense.

Return of the State Legislature

Yesterday, the Speaker of the House sent out a letter to House members regarding the continuation of the legislative session. Virtual committee hearings will begin next week, and then staff are expected to begin transitioning back in on May 18th, with in-person committee meetings resuming May 19th. The Speaker announced he is still working with the Senate but the intention of reconvening for session remains for June 11th. This all may change but we are monitoring all decisions closely and will keep you updated.

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/vOcyL9hiN7Dnfl1G3K3A1I/>). 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.

Absentee Voting

Earlier this week, the Secretary of State announced an Absentee Ballot Fraud Task Force. This is to ensure accurate vote counts for the June 9th primary. The members of the task force are: U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia Bobby Christine, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit District Attorney Shannon Wallace, Clayton Judicial Circuit District Attorney Tasha Mosley, Dougherty Judicial Circuit District Attorney Greg Edwards, Hall County Solicitor General Stephanie Woodard, and Cobb County Solicitor General Barry Morgan.

Legal Climate Change

Attorney General Chris Carr expressed his concern for businesses and their protection as they begin to open during the coronavirus outbreak. As a follow-up, the Georgia Chamber is wanting to send a letter to the governor, urging him to sign an executive order to protect

businesses from liability during the crisis. Businesses are encouraged to sign onto the letter in support by COB Monday.

Open For Business

With the recent ease of restrictions on businesses, many around the state are deciding whether they should open or remain closed. One of the larger companies, Simon Property Group, has announced they will be opening their malls in the state starting today, May 1st, however they have since delayed opening until Monday. Many Atlanta restaurants have announced they are reopening for dining-in service. Some of those include: Bad Daddy's Burger Bar, C&S Seafood and Oysters, Chronic Tacos, Hugo's Oyster Bar, Jason's Deli, Johnnie MacCracken's Celtic Pub, Moe's Original BBQ, Roasters, Rocky Mountain Pizza, Waffle House, The Original Hotdog Factory, and Bishoku.

Not every business has been as fortunate. This week, The Georgian Club announced they would be closing permanently amid the coronavirus outbreak. This comes after 38 years of business. The Georgia Grille in Buckhead also announced they were closing their doors.

Federal Funding

We have been staying up-to-date on all the loans and the makeup of the stimulus packages. Please 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>

Last week, 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!

