



**The American
Institute
of Architects**



American Institute of Architects - Week 19

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

On Thursday, May 21, Governor Kemp held a press conference to update Georgians on the fight against COVID-19. He began on a positive note in saying that Georgia has reached a milestone - less than 1000 people are hospitalized with COVID-19. The state currently has 919 people hospitalized. The Governor also highlighted the huge steps Georgia has taken in increasing testing in Georgia. Through partnerships with Augusta University and CVS, access to tests has continued to increase daily. Governor Kemp encouraged Georgians to get check-ups, routine procedures and elective surgeries. He said these will sustain healthcare facilities and create better overall health for Georgians in the future. Kemp briefly addressed a recent misreporting of data on the DPH website. He recognized the mistake and asked that people allow them some patience and understand the huge job they are doing.

Joining the Governor at his press conference were DPH Commissioner Kathleen Toomey, GEMA Director Homer Bryson, General Tom Carden, Department of Public Safety Commissioner Gary Vowell, DNR Commissioner Mark Williams, and Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black.

Governor Kemp and others spoke about the available equipment in Georgia. Care homes and other organizations seek personal protection equipment (PPE) and are receiving such equipment from the Department of Public Health.

Commissioner Toomey of the Department of Public Health said that the integrity of Georgia's COVID-19 data is her top priority and that DPH is working around the clock to be as transparent as possible, improve the data given to them and to decrease the time it takes to report it. She spoke about contact tracing saying 3,300 patients have currently been interviewed and they hope to increase that number.

In addition to COVID-19, the Governor and others warned Georgia that we are entering into hurricane season and asked that people listen to officials and heed warnings as we monitor these situations. The Governor also encouraged everyone to fill out their census forms

noting that Georgia is being in Census response and that our population determines federal funding and other important things.

Executive Orders

On Thursday, Governor Kemp issued an executive order regarding the operation of overnight summer camps. The order deals mainly with the health of campers and workers requiring tests to be done before they attend the camp and requires anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 to vacate the camp. It also requires that everyone remain on the campus of the camp unless in the case of an emergency.

Resuming the Legislative Session

We have heard from many legislators that they are anxious to get back to work. The budget is going to be a challenging task and the legislature is constitutionally required to pass a budget before the end of the Legislative Session and, in this case, prior to July 1. There are also a number of key bills still in play that legislators have expressed interest in passing in 2020.

As we mentioned last week, here are the guidelines to be followed when the Capitol reopens.

[http://www.house.ga.gov/Documents/Information/COVID-19/Finalized Memo for Committee Approval.pdf](http://www.house.ga.gov/Documents/Information/COVID-19/Finalized_Memo_for_Committee_Approval.pdf)

We are currently anticipating a June 11th or June 15th reconvening date for the General Assembly. Legislators will allow in-person committee meetings beginning next week exercising strict social distancing measures. It is unclear whether they will be allowing the public to attend. They have been conducting virtual budget hearings for the past two weeks.

Campaign update

We are nearly two weeks away from primary Election Day (June 9th). Among those running, 26 Georgia House Representatives and 12 Georgia Senators face challengers from within their own party. We generally expect incumbents to win reelection, but there are a few high-profile races such as the 21st Senate District Republican Primary between Senate Transportation Chairman Brandon Beach and Representative Michael Caldwell. On the Democratic side, Representative Michele Henson is aiming to survive this primary election cycle by beating her three primary challengers, notably forensic chemist LaDena Bolton and attorney Zulma Lopez. Furthermore, there are various open seats across the state where the primary election will essentially decide the next representative for that district. Candidates across Georgia have had to become creative in reaching their audiences amidst COVID-19 leading to many virtual fundraisers and meet and greets. Because of the pandemic being so unprecedented, there could be the possibility of major upsets and surprises this election cycle because of the virus. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office has sent every Georgian an absent ballot application. Most recently the Secretary of State's office has recorded that nearly 1.5 million Georgians have submitted a request for an absentee ballot for the upcoming election, and more than 1 million absentee ballots have already been sent out to voters. With just almost two weeks away from election day, nearly 400,000 Georgians

have already returned their absentee ballots. Upon receiving your application, it must be mailed in to receive your ballot. Once you receive your ballot, you must return the ballot in order for it to count. If a candidate fails to achieve a majority of the vote on June 9th, the top two vote getters in a race will go into a runoff election held on August 11, 2020.

Fourth Federal Aid Package update

Last week we reported that the HEROes Act has been proposed. The act was introduced by House Democratic leadership as their “phase four” COVID-19 stimulus and relief package. The bill includes, among other things, financial relief to state, local and tribal governments; extensions to enhanced unemployment benefits, increased access to health insurance and additional protections for Medicaid and Medicare patients, debt collection relief and another direct cash payment to individual households. The HEROes Act narrowly passed the US House by a 208 - 199 vote.

Here is a link to the bill - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6800/all-actions?overview=closed&q={%22roll-call-vote%22:%22all%22}&KWICView=false>

Here is a link to the vote - <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2020/roll109.xml>

We do not expect that the bill will pass the Senate as Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has expressed his opposition as has the President. While Senate leaders have described the bill as a “laundry list of pet projects” as well as “dead on arrival,” they have indicated that careful consideration will be given in proposing a fourth stimulus package. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said this is the House proposal and they are open to negotiations.

School Reopenings

This week marked the end of the school year for most systems in Georgia. While students participated in year end parades and virtual class parties, everyone is anxious to know what next year will look like. This week, the CDC released comprehensive guidelines for opening schools in August. It is important to note that the guidelines listed are suggestions and not requirements. Everything is subject to local control of the system and what will fit each system best. You can find the guidelines here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

In Georgia, Governor Kemp appointed a special working group on reopening of schools called the Georgia “restart” groups. These working groups include teachers, school district staff, public health officials, representatives of education organizations, nonprofits and state agencies will focus on topics including school meals, distance learning, professional learning, connectivity and devices, mental health, supplemental learning and healthy guidelines for facilities and equipment. Members of the group can be found on the following release.

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=775>

Covid-19 Testing Updates

As a reminder, testing is now available for all Georgians, whether or not they have symptoms. Georgians are asked to contact their local healthcare providers or any Georgia public health department to schedule a test. To find a local public health department, visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/>.

CVS has announced 23 new testing locations in Georgia where patients will do a self-swab through the drive thru. To find a location and see if you meet the criteria, click here: <https://www.cvs.com/minuteclinic/covid-19-testing>

Business Updates

More and more businesses continue to reopen. For a full list with continuing updates, visit <https://whatnowatlanta.com/heres-a-running-list-of-restaurants-that-have-are-reopening-dining-rooms-patios/>

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!