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- **Office of the Governor**

State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25305

Office Phone:


304.558.2000 or 1.888.438.2731

Governor's Mansion:

304.558.3588

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COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice reports more than nine percent of West Virginians have now been tested; strongly urges residents to wear masks

6/29/2020



CHARLESTON, WV – Gov. Jim Justice joined West Virginia health leaders and other officials today for his latest daily press briefing regarding the State's COVID-19 response.

MORE THAN NINE PERCENT OF ALL WEST VIRGINIANS TESTED

During Monday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that more than nine percent of the population of West Virginia has now been tested for COVID-19 – a higher rate than all of the states bordering West Virginia and a rate that's higher than the national average.

"This is an incredible threshold to get to," Gov. Justice said. "But we want to keep testing and testing because the more information we have, the better off we'll be."

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GOVERNOR URGES WEST VIRGINIANS TO WEAR MASKS AND FOLLOW SAFETY GUIDELINES

Following the recent death of an 82-year-old man from Greenbrier County, Gov. Justice renewed his calls for all members of the public to wear masks and follow safety guidelines to the best of their ability.

"I just caution and underline, over and over, for everyone to use the guidelines that we put out, to try really hard to social distance, and, for crying out loud, wear a mask," Gov. Justice said. "I know they're a little uncomfortable and it's a little bit of an inconvenience. But, when we've got to deal with losing somebody – that somebody is a name, it's a family, and it's all kinds of friends and loved ones.

"So please, please, listen to what we're trying to say," Gov. Justice continued. "We're trying to keep you as safe as we possibly can."

“West Virginia, what you have done, already, has been a miracle beyond belief. But, absolutely, we need to keep our guard up because this thing can turn really bad really quickly.”

GOV. JUSTICE PARTICIPATES IN CALL WITH WHITE HOUSE, VICE PRESIDENT PENCE

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice participated in yet another conference call with Vice President Mike Pence, members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and other governors across the country to discuss the latest developments in nationwide efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“They were talking about a secondary-type outbreak that’s going on in the country,” Gov. Justice said. “This outbreak, now, is attacking our younger people as well. A percentage of the younger people that didn’t seem to have a problem with this before now have a problem from it. If you’re under the age of 50 and get this, it can be a problem. In most situations, it is not a problem. But, in some situations that are popping up, some people are getting really sick.

“They also told us that the drug, remdesivir, there are now large supplies of the drug for the United States from Gilead,” Gov. Justice continued. “Through this September, they will be pumping more and more of that drug to the states to treat people if there happened to be an outbreak.”

The Governor reported that this will allow American hospitals to purchase the drug in amounts allocated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and state health departments. The Trump Administration explained that they plan to allocate this drug in the same way they did before, which means the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources will be distributing it to local hospitals across the state.

WEEK 10 OF “THE COMEBACK” NOW UNDERWAY

During today’s briefing, Gov. Justice reminded West Virginians that today marks the start of the 10th week of his plan to reopen the state’s economy: West Virginia Strong – The Comeback.

No reopenings took effect Monday. However, the Governor explained that several additional types of activities will be permitted to resume this Wednesday, provided that all safety guidelines are being properly followed.

Approved activity reopenings on Wednesday, July 1, include:

- Fairs, festivals, amusement parks, and rides
- Outdoor open-air concerts

[Click here to view safety guidelines](#)

Entities included in each phase of this reopening plan are not required to resume operations on any specific date. This plan provides the option for reopening, not a requirement.

NUMBERS UPDATE

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice took time to assure West Virginians that the state’s total number of positive cases is now correct on the COVID-19 online dashboard.

“We have now dug deeper and deeper into the situation,” Gov. Justice said. “Our total number of positive cases has always been correct, but we had a problem with the number of active cases reported. What does that mean? Well, basically it means that we were over-reporting our number of sick people – which is an okay problem to have found, because it means we’re better than what I’ve been telling you that we are.”

"But, at the end of the day, we owe it to all West Virginians for our numbers to always be right," Gov. Justice continued.

"So what do we do? We go back and we go into a deep dive where we're now going back and trying to find every single situation with every one of our active cases."

An investigation, ordered by Gov. Justice last week after the number of active COVID-19 cases in Randolph County were found to be much lower than shown on the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' (DHHR) COVID-19 dashboard, has found that the DHHR electronic case surveillance system was not updated with recovered case data from the local health departments and that DHHR did not follow up with local health departments to routinely verify recovered cases of COVID-19.

Recovered cases are determined by the local health departments as they follow individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. The error in the numbers of recovered individuals on the COVID-19 dashboard was discovered by the West Virginia National Guard which contacted the Randolph County Health Department to verify the numbers. These cases, which had not been entered into the electronic case surveillance system as recovered, were cases from the Huttonsville Correctional Facility outbreak several weeks ago.

"We're finding too many mistakes," Gov. Justice said. "Now, I want our local health departments to hear me and hear me really clearly: you have done one whale of a job and I am so proud of you it's unbelievable.

"If you need additional help to see to it that these numbers are taken care of in a timely way, I will absolutely partner with you," Gov. Justice continued.

EMPLOYEES AT STATE'S VETERANS HOMES TESTED

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice announced that all staff members at West Virginia's two state veterans homes – the West

Virginia Veterans Home in Barboursville and the West Virginia Veterans Nursing Facility in Clarksburg – have now been tested for COVID-19.

All of the test results came back negative.

“We are continuing the commitment to protect our veterans in this state all the time,” Gov. Justice said. “Everything we have, as far as our freedoms, as far as our liberties in West Virginia and all across this great country, we owe to our veterans and all of our active military. So we’re going to continue to try to look after them as best as we possibly can.”

CARES ACT SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS / ECONOMIC RECOVERY UPDATE

After announcing Friday his plan to use \$150 million of West Virginia’s share of federal CARES Act funding to award 15,000 of West Virginia’s small businesses \$10,000 each to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Justice provided a reminder Monday that the application process for these small business grants will soon be announced.

Any small business in West Virginia that was in existence as of February 29, 2020, that has anywhere from 5-35 employees will be able to apply for this funding.

The small business grants are just one portion of the Governor’s [overall proposal to award \\$1.25 billion in federal funding through the CARES Act](#) to benefit all West Virginians.

Another \$970 million in other grants have also been received in West Virginia.

“All of us, together, will make this economic recovery happen in West Virginia and it will happen in a really positive way,” Gov. Justice said Monday.

Also on Friday, the Governor announced that the State will see yet another revenue surplus for Fiscal Year 2020, despite the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the economy.

CITIES/COUNTIES GRANT FUNDING UP TO \$17.1 MILLION

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice provided an update on cities and counties throughout West Virginia applying for funds through the federal CARES Act, reporting that more than \$17.1 million has now been awarded all across the state.

A new web portal is now available for city and county government officials to apply for this grant funding, at grants.wv.gov. Interested parties can also call the helpline: **1-833-94-GRANT**.

Each of the recipients of CARES Act funding, along with grant amounts, are now available to view through the [COVID-19 transparency web portal](#) provided by West Virginia State Auditor's Office.

UPCOMING FREE COMMUNITY TESTING: HARRISON COUNTY

As part of his initiative to increase testing opportunities across the state, Gov. Justice announced that [free community COVID-19 testing](#) is being provided in Harrison County this Wednesday, July 1, 2020.

Testing is scheduled as follows:

Harrison County

Wednesday, July 1

2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Robert C. Byrd High School: 1 Eagle Way, Clarksburg, WV 26301

MYRTLE BEACH OUTBREAKS

Once again on Monday, Gov. Justice discussed the recent surge in COVID-19 cases being seen at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, again cautioning residents who are considering traveling to the popular vacation destination that there are now cases in 18 West Virginia counties that are tied residents traveling to the Myrtle Beach area.

Berkeley, Boone, Cabell, Fayette, Greenbrier, Harrison, Jackson, Kanawha, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Putnam, Preston, Raleigh, Ritchie, Taylor, and Wood counties have reported to the DHHR that they are investigating cases that may be tied to Myrtle Beach travel.

“Again, I encourage anyone who’s been to Myrtle Beach to be tested,” Gov. Justice said. “Getting tested is the best way for you to help protect everyone else.”

UPDATE ON CHURCH OUTBREAKS

Once again Monday, Gov. Justice provided an update on several church-related outbreaks of COVID-19 across West Virginia.

Gov. Justice reported that three church-related outbreaks still remain active at this time. They are associated with churches located in Greenbrier, Ohio, and Boone counties.

WEST VIRGINIA STRONG SUMMER FOOD ASSISTANCE MAP

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice reminded West Virginians that an interactive free-feeding location map, designed to help connect

citizens in need to food resources across the state, is available online.

[Click here to view the map](#)

More than 690 free-feeding locations have now been made available through a multi-agency effort between the West Virginia National Guard, the West Virginia Department of Education, the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services, the West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WV VOAD), and the United Way.

If food distribution locations aren't available in some communities, individuals are encouraged to call 211 for further assistance.

STATEWIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES TESTING UPDATE

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice provided another update on his initiative to test all inmates and employees within the State's network of correctional facilities for COVID-19.

The most recent [testing results](#) showed there were a total of two active COVID-19 cases among all inmates and residents across West Virginia. The cases are all at Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail. There also remain two active COVID-19 cases among corrections employees and contract staff.

More than 10,000 inmates and 4,000 employees were tested in total.

WEST VIRGINIANS URGED TO PARTICIPATE IN CENSUS

Once more today, Gov. Justice asked all West Virginians to participate in the 2020 United States Census.

Every West Virginian who does not respond to the Census represents a loss of \$20,000 in federal funds over the next 10 years for the state and its local communities. The funds can go toward things like healthcare, education, infrastructure, school lunch programs, and more.

Be counted in minutes: 2020census.gov.

WV STATE MUSEUM TO REOPEN NEXT TUESDAY, JULY 7

The West Virginia State Museum, located in the Culture Center, State Capitol Complex, Charleston, will reopen its doors to visitors on Tuesday, July 7. The museum will operate under normal business hours, Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

The maximum occupancy allowed in the state museum will be limited to 52 people. Visitors will be asked to follow social distancing guidelines at all times. Museum staff will wear face coverings and will follow special cleaning guidelines in accordance with best practices from the WV DHHR and CDC. All visitors to the museum are encouraged to wear a face covering and will have their temperature taken upon entry. All visitors will also be asked to fill out the West Virginia State Visitor COVID-19 Screening Form.

The West Virginia State Museum Gift Shop also will open on July 7 and resume normal business hours. The shop will be open from Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Click here to view all Executive Orders and other actions](#) taken by Gov. Justice to combat the spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia.

For more information about COVID-19 prevention and more, call the State's toll-free hotline at **1-800-887-4304** or visit [Coronavirus.wv.gov](https://www.coronavirus.wv.gov).

Contact Information

Jordan Damron, jordan.l.damron@wv.gov

Contact

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Charleston, WV 25305

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