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Updates from Gov. Northam's Press Conference

October 13

- **Northam COVID diagnosis:** Governor Northam had a mild experience with COVID, and he and the First Lady have not had any symptoms in several days. They were cleared to go back to work. The Governor and First Lady adhered to the health guidance precautions as soon as they tested positive for COVID-19. About 65 members of the Governor's staff were told to quarantine for two weeks. To his knowledge, none of those 65 staff members tested positive, which is a testament to wearing a mask. The Governor encouraged Virginians to continue to wear a mask. Governor is cautiously optimistic about coming out of Phase 3 at the appropriate time, but numbers are going up in neighboring states. Until he sees a downward trend, he does not see the guidance changing. There are ongoing communications with the schools and he wants to get children back in school. He has not considered expanding capacity at football stadiums or allowing seating at bars.
- **Contact Tracing Procedures:** Dr. Danny Avula, Director of the Richmond Health Department discussed the role of the local health department in contact tracing. For every new case, the department looks back 48 hours from the onset of symptoms or positive test to determine close contacts. Someone is considered in close contact if the person was with a COVID positive person for 15 minutes or greater within close contact. Anyone who meets the definition of a close contact must go into a quarantine period. A quarantine period occurs when a person is exposed but has no diagnosis of infection. An isolation period occurs after a person tests positive. Most do not need a test after an isolation period.
- **Data:** The percent positivity in Virginia is trending down, below 5%. VDH has continuously worked to refine data systems to better illustrate infection rates. Recently, VDH unveiled a pandemic dashboard to help explain data in individual communities. VDH is preparing a dashboard for outbreaks in K12 schools and institutions of higher education. This will be very similar to what VDH offers for nursing home positivity rates.
- **Legislation:** Northam signed 6 bills this morning passed during the General Assembly's special session, and highlighted the bill that makes Juneteenth a state-wide holiday. He also signed a bill for civil immunity for hospice workers, home health workers, and others caring for COVID patients.
- **CARES Act Funding:** Last week, Northam announced he would allocate \$220 million for K12 and \$30 million for broadband projects, and \$12 million for rental assistance out of the CARES Act funding. He also will provide \$50 million for hazard pay for home health workers, vaccination program, and childcare providers. The administration is looking to expand eligibility for Rebuild Virginia project.
- **Elections:** Deadline to register to vote is today. This morning a Verizon fiber was inadvertently cut and the outage impacted the Virginia Department of Elections and many other state agencies. Keyanna Conner, Secretary of Administration, stated that the cut occurred on the 10 GB circuit installed this spring to supplement the increased remote workload from COVID-19. Some services have been moved over to a backup line, and the state has a resiliency plan to update all backup systems should another

outage occur. A temporary solution is expected to be in place by 4:00pm to bring websites back online. The Administration is exploring options to extend voter registration deadlines. The deadline is set out in the Code of Virginia, and it does not appear the Governor has the authority to change the deadline. Northam would support a court ordered extension of the deadline. Rita Davis, Counsel to the Governor reiterated that the Governor does not have the authority to extend the deadline. In 2016, the Eastern District issued an extension so there is precedent for the courts to grant this type of relief for voters. Northam encouraged Virginians to register to vote and vote absentee or early if needed. As of yesterday, more than 550,000 Virginians have voted early and in person. That is a quarter of the total voter turnout in 2016.

- **Threat investigation of Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer:** An FBI agent testified that the suspects accused of plotting to kidnap Governor Whitmer also considered kidnapping Governor Northam. Because that is an ongoing criminal investigation, Northam did not want to take questions or make additional comments. He emphasized that the Governor and First Lady are safe thanks to the efforts of the Executive Protection Unit. There is no imminent danger to the Governor or his family and Northam will not operate under a cloud of intimidation. He is concerned about the comments and rhetoric about our elected officials coming from Washington.
- **Testing:** Dr. Norman Oliver gave a detailed update on the COVID-19 case numbers. In the last 24 hours, new cases totaled 1,235 and there were 11 new deaths. Virginia's totals are 160,805 cases and 3,372 deaths. Testing continues to go well with an average of 15,000 tests per day. In the last reporting period there were another 20,000 PCR tests, and 383 antibody tests.

September 15

- **Data:** Virginia continues to see roughly 1,000 cases per day. The percent positivity is currently 6.8 percent. The restrictions in the Eastern Region worked and cases in the area are declining. Governor Northam said they are watching the Southwest Region closely as cases are increasing. Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to continue to wear face coverings and physical distance. Northam also encouraged Virginians to download COVIDWISE. As of yesterday, more than half a million people have downloaded the app.
- **Utilities:** Governor Northam has asked the State Corporation Commission to extend its moratorium on utility disconnections. The original moratorium expires tomorrow, but Governor Northam asked the SCC to extend it until October 5. Governor Northam said this will give the General Assembly time to address this issue in the budget.
- **PPE and Testing:** Virginia has authorized \$42 million in CARES Act funding for PPE. The Virginia National Guard continues to help with testing events.
- **Small Business Grant Program:** Governor Northam said he will have more information next week on expanding the eligibility for the Small Business Grant Program, which is providing more than \$70 million to businesses impacted by the pandemic.
- **Election:** Governor Northam said he expects a high number of absentee voters this year. So far, the Department of Elections has received 790,000 requests for absentee ballots. Ballots will be mailed out starting this Friday. Governor Northam emphasized that this year anyone can vote absentee. Governor Northam explained the ways Virginians can vote this November.
- **Flu Shots:** Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to get their flu shots.

- **Emergency Workforce Standards:** The DOLI emergency standards went into effect at the end of July. There have been complaints, but they are not public yet as the investigations have not been completed.
- **Schools:** Dr. Norm Oliver said the state will keep track of information of outbreaks at K-12 schools.

September 1

- **Data:** Virginia's testing numbers are ranging from 15,000-20,000 tests per day. Virginia's percent positivity is around 7 percent. The Eastern Region, which saw a spike of 12 percent positivity in July, is now down to just under 9 percent positivity. Governor Northam said case numbers remain steady, and we need to remain vigilant.
- **Reopening:** Governor Northam said there will be no changes in reopening in the Eastern Region before Labor Day. He noted the surges in cases that occurred after Memorial Day and Fourth of July as his reason not to ease restrictions before the holiday weekend. Governor Northam said if the numbers continue to trend in the right direction, the Eastern Region will be able to join the rest of Virginia in Phase III soon.
- **COVIDWISE:** The exposure notification app, COVIDWISE, is performing well. More than 460,000 Virginians have downloaded the app. Governor Northam thanked Virginians for downloading the app and encouraged others to download it.
- **Testing:** Virginia is averaging 15,000-20,000 PCR tests per day. Governor Northam noted that the state lab is now doing antibody testing. He said antibody testing is another important tool we can use to better understand the virus. Governor Northam encouraged those that think they need a test to get a test. Governor Northam said that despite changes to the CDC guidelines, he encourages those that have symptoms or may have been exposed to consult their physicians.
- **DMV:** Governor Northam extended the validity of licenses and IDs that expire at the end of October for 60 days.
- **Elections:** Governor Northam said the Commonwealth is seeing a shortage of poll workers due to COVID-19. The Department of Elections is partnering with the Department of Health to provide safe and sanitary polling locations for voters and poll workers. You can apply to be a poll worker at www.vote.virginia.gov.
- **Census:** Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to complete the census. Currently, Virginia has the seventh highest return rate. The deadline to complete the census is September 30, 2020.
- **Colleges and Universities:** Governor Northam said we are seeing concerning numbers at our colleges and universities very early on. He noted that his administration provided specific guidelines to the schools, and the colleges and universities' plans have been certified by SCHEV. Governor Northam said he is monitoring the situation closely.

August 5

On Wednesday, August 5, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response.

- **Data:** Virginia's percent positive has remained steady at 7.2 percent the last few weeks. The Eastern Region's percent positivity is about 10 percent and after a spike at the beginning of the month, it has leveled off.
- **New App:** Virginia is launching a new app called COVIDWISE to help with contact tracing. Virginia is the first state to use this technology. Governor Northam said this app does not use GPS tracking, and Virginian's privacy is protected. Users voluntarily input information, such as positive test results. Governor Northam said this is another tool we have to help protect ourselves and our communities.
- **Testing:** Virginia is one of seven states joining together to find ways to expand rapid antigen testing. Governor Northam said this is another way that the states are leading America's national response to COVID-19. The press release on the announcement can be found [here](#).
- **Healthcare Ecosystem:** Last week, Governor Northam convened the leaders of Eastern Virginia Medical School, Old Dominion University, Sentara Healthcare, to discuss opportunities to collaborate to create a post-COVID economy in Hampton Roads. They agreed to hire a third-party consultant to strengthen the healthcare ecosystem in the area. Additionally, the Virginia Center for Health Innovation launched a taskforce with support from the Northam administration to review payment models for primary care physicians and how it may need to evolve in the post-COVID world.
- **DOLI Standards:** The Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) workplace emergency standards were published last week and will be in effect for the next 6 months. DOLI can help businesses that have questions or need help with compliance.
- **Hampton Roads Update:** Governor Northam reviewed the additional measures that have gone into effect for the Hampton Roads area to slow the spread of COVID-19. He said it is too soon to tell if they are working, but businesses are complying.

July 28

On Tuesday, July 28, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Data:** In Virginia, 87,000 people have tested positive for COVID-19 and over 2,000 people have died. Virginia has avoided a large spike in cases that many other states have experienced. In fact, cases are largely stable in 4 out of the 5 regions. But, Governor Northam noted there is a concerning rise in cases in Hampton Roads. As of today, the percent positivity is 7.3 percent statewide, down from 7.7 percent last week. The percent positivity in Hampton Roads is 10.8 percent. If the Hampton Roads and Peninsula region is removed from the state's data, the state's positivity rate is 6.0 percent.
- **New Tools:** Governor Northam reviewed some the "new tools" that his administration has implemented as a result of COVID-19. He discussed [the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program](#) as well as [Rebuild VA](#), which Governor Northam announced yesterday to help small businesses. Governor Northam also noted that Virginia is implementing the country's first emergency workplace safety standards for COVID-19. He said these tools are about mitigation and recovery.

- **Meeting with Deborah Birx:** Governor Northam and the senior health team met with Dr. Deborah Birx this morning. She was complimentary of the state's work and the mitigation measures the Commonwealth has been taking. Two dozen stakeholders, including local public health leaders, hospital administrators, representatives of nursing homes, and legislators, also met with Dr. Birx today.
- **Hampton Roads:** Governor Northam announced that he and Dr. Norm Oliver will issue an executive order and public health emergency order that will take effect on Friday, July 31 for the Hampton Roads region. The executive order and public health emergency order include the following provisions:
 - No alcohol will be sold or consumed onsite after 10:00pm and all restaurants must close by midnight. Governor Northam said this effectively closes all bars.
 - All indoor dining will be limited to 50 percent capacity along with food courts, breweries, wineries, and distilleries.
 - Indoor and outdoor gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited.Governor Northam said he will review the data in 2-3 weeks to see if the guidelines can be lifted.
- **Local Governments:** Governor Northam announced that his administration will distribute the second half of the CARES Act funding (almost \$645 million) to localities this week. The Governor said this money will help localities provide rent assistance, food security, PPE, and tools to help educate our children.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** A few week ago, nursing homes accounted for one-third of Virginia's cases, but now just 1 percent of individuals tested are positive in nursing homes. Dr. Forlano said base-line testing has occurred in almost all long-term care facilities. She noted there are issues with turn-around times with testing. She also noted that the National Guard was brought in to do the base-line testing, but they are not doing the serial testing.
- **Testing:** Test turn-around time is now close to a week. Governor Northam noted that there are challenges with reagents and supplies, but the state lab turn-around is about 48-72 hours. Governor Northam said that many of the commercial labs are experiencing a backlog in tests as demand for tests has increased not only in Virginia, but in other states as well. Secretary of Health and Human Resources Dan Carey said the administration has weekly communications with the testing community, including private labs.

July 14

- **Data:** Governor Northam said we have not seen the spike in cases that other states have seen, but we are seeing some troubling numbers, particularly in Hampton Roads. Virginia's 7-day trend in cases is rising. Governor Northam noted that we are up to 17,000 tests per day. Virginia's percent positivity is 6.8 percent. Specifically, the number of cases is rising in the Eastern Region of the state, where the percent positivity is over 10 percent. Governor Northam said we are not seeing spikes like Florida and Texas are seeing, but noted that we don't live in a vacuum.

- **New Actions:** Governor Northam announced several actions the administration is taking to help prevent the spread of the virus.
 - Governor Northam has asked the local health team in Hampton Roads for their recommendations on actions to stop the spread of the virus, which he is reviewing.
 - Governor Northam said the first step is stronger enforcement of the existing regulations.
 - Health Commissioner Norm Oliver is sending a letter to health district directors reminding them of their authority to enforce face coverings and physical distancing regulations.
 - Governor Northam is directing teams made up of members of VDH, VDACS, ABC, and other licensing agencies to conduct unannounced visits to establishments as needed. VDH is deploying 100 people to ramp up enforcement. This will happen across the state but will be focused in the Hampton Roads area. Governor Northam said if businesses do not follow regulations, their licenses will be on the line.
 - Governor Northam also called on businesses to increase enforcement.
 - Governor Northam is writing to the mayors of the beach communities asking for an update on beach access plans. Governor Northam wants to ensure they are following their mitigation measures.
 - Governor Northam has also directed ABC to develop a plan to impose an earlier cutoff for alcohol sales at restaurants. More details to come on this plan.

Governor Northam emphasized that this is not the end of the actions he may take, but the beginning. Governor Northam said he is considering decreasing the number of people allowed at large gatherings. He noted that, if needed, he would roll back the Forward Virginia plan regionally. He also said that there is no plan to move to a Phase IV, or further ease restrictions, at this time.

- **PPE:** Governor Northam said Virginia continues to get PPE shipments and the state is distributing to regional healthcare coalitions, regional jurisdictions, health districts, and long-term care facilities as needed.
- **School:** Governor Northam said schools reopening will be determined by local school districts. SCHEV is reviewing plans for higher education.
- **Rent/Mortgage Relief Program:** At the end of June, Governor Northam announced that \$50 million in CARES Act funding will go towards helping people who are unable to pay their rent and mortgage. The program has been running for 9 business days and has served 900 households.
- **Unemployment:** Since March 15th, 938,559 Virginians have applied for unemployment benefits and 91 percent of eligible claims are paid within 14 days. VEC and Career Works is hosting a virtual hiring event on July 28.
- **DOLI Emergency Labor Standards:** This week, the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) and the Safety and Health Codes Board is expected to finalize the new labor standards to protect workers during the pandemic. Virginia is the first state in nation to create such standards in this crisis. Governor Northam said those standards will be enforced as soon as they are cleared.
- **DMV:** DMV locations have been slowly reopening. There are now 41 DMV locations open by appointment only. Locations have extended hours to help accommodate

people. Last month, Governor Northam gave a 90-day extension for licenses, registration or other credentials that are expiring through the end of October.

- **National Guard:** Title 32 status will end soon, and Governor Northam has asked the federal government to extend the status through the end of the year.
- **Special Session:** Governor Northam said legislators continue to plan for a special session next month and will announce the dates soon.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** To date, 204 of 280 nursing homes have done point prevalence testing or are in the process of testing. An additional 58 nursing homes have been scheduled, and 15 are in the process of being scheduled. Dr. Forlano said she expects point prevalence testing to be completed in all nursing homes in the next 10 days. Dr. Forlano said testing employees at nursing homes is included in the state's guidance.

June 25

On Thursday, June 25, Governor Northam held the last regular COVID-19 press conference. Moving forward, Governor Northam will hold press conferences as needed. He made the following announcements today:

- **Data:** Governor Northam reminded Virginians of how far we've come since the start of the pandemic. Today's percent positivity number is the lowest it has been in weeks. It is 6 percent today. The other data is also moving in the right direction, except for hospital bed capacity, but it is still well below max capacity. Governor Northam emphasized that we need to continue to use social distancing measures and be cautious as the numbers in other states are increasing.
- **Testing:** Dr. Karen Remley gave an update on testing. The seven day rolling average is consistently at 10,000 tests per day. To date, there have been 53,630 antibody test results reported to VDH. Of those tests, 6.4 percent were positive. Governor Northam has approved a "One-Lab" network using CARES Act funding. Virginia will expand the capability of DCLS and Fairfax (FFx), Virginia's two public health labs, but also partner with at least three facilities to expand their testing for public health. Dr. Remley said their goal is to expand capacity beyond what the UVA model says we'll need. She outlined the state's testing goals:
 - All symptomatic individuals and close contacts referred by public health or a clinician will get tested
 - Test 2-4 percent of the population a month per district
 - 6,000-13,000/day statewide
 - Ensuring there is less than 10% positivity for each region
 - Over test high risk populations – socioeconomically disadvantaged, chronic illnesses, elderly
 - Point Prevalence Survey long-term care facilities, prisons, jails, and behavioral health
 - Outbreak testing and containment
 - Overall containment through contact tracing for each case

In July, VDH will begin Sentinel Surveillance, which is mirrored after influenza.

Additionally, in every district, every uninsured patient has somewhere to be referred to

for medical care. There are now 26 free clinics that can test for COVID-19, which is up from 4 in April. This is more than anywhere else in the country.

- **Evictions:** Governor Northam called on chief circuit court judges to extend the moratorium on evictions, which ends on Sunday, June 28. In addition, Governor Northam has directed the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to create the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program, using \$50 million in CARES Act funding. The program will help cover rent and mortgage payments for those who are experiencing financial difficulties due to COVID-19. Governor Northam noted that the program will have an equity lens and will target outreach to people of color, since people of color are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- **Energy Bills:** The Department of Social Services (DSS) already offers an energy assistance program for low-income families with children under 6 years old, senior citizens, and citizens with disabilities. Additionally, DSS plans to launch a one-time energy assistance program in July using CARES Act funding. The program will provide assistance to people that aren't typically eligible for energy assistance. The focus of the program will help pay off energy debt that has accumulated during COVID-19, so their energy will not be cut off when the service cut off moratorium ends on August 31. DSS will also issue one-time supplemental payments to households that have previously received fuel or crisis assistance. DSS will issue more information about these programs next month.
- **Legislation:** On July 1, bills passed by the 2020 General Assembly will go into effect. Governor Northam reviewed some of these new laws that are relevant in the current environment, including legislation that will make it easier to vote and criminal justice reform bills. Governor Northam said there is a need to not only review the budget during the special session, but also review issues of racial injustice and police reform.
- **DMV:** Governor Northam announced that Virginians will have an additional 90 days to renew licenses, registration, and other credentials at the DMV.
- **Back to School:** Clark Mercer, the Governor's Chief of Staff, said the Governor's guidance on reopening K-12 schools is not a mandate and local schools boards should use the guidance to come up with a their own plan. Mercer said the administration is working on guidance beyond Phase III, which will include a path to get every student back in school every day.
- **Racing/Sports:** In Phase II, race tracks can operate without spectators. In Phase III, up to 1,000 individuals can participate in these functions.
- **Amusement Parks:** Governor Northam said they have had a lot of discussions with amusement parks. Phase III guidance allows up to 1,000 people at amusement parks. Governor Northam said there are so many contacts at these parks that he believes 1,000 people is the right number for now. Governor Northam said as soon as his team feels comfortable increasing that number, he will do so.

- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Dr. Forlano noted that the [guidance](#) that was released last week is facility specific, so she could not give a date as to when these facilities will reopen. Dr. Forlano said the guidance is a set of recommendations, but most of the facilities they work with aim to be compliant with public health guidance. If a facility feels like they have met the criteria to open, facilities should inform their local health department.
- **Domestic Travel:** VDH does have guidance on domestic travel, but currently there are no restrictions on domestic travel.

June 23

On Tuesday, June 23, Governor Northam made the following announcements at his biweekly press conference on COVID-19:

- **Data:** The data continues to look good. VDH continues to hire contact tracers, and as of yesterday, VDH has 1,000 contact tracers on staff. The number of patients hospitalized with a positive or pending COVID-19 test continues to trend downward. Additionally, the percent positivity continues to trend downward and is now at 6.4 percent. Governor Northam said Virginia has averaged between 8,000 and 12,000 tests per day since June 2. Virginia has enough PPE and hospital bed capacity.
- **Reopening:** Governor Northam announced that Virginia will move into Phase III on Wednesday, July 1. Governor Northam reiterated that Phase III means you are still safer at home and teleworking is still strongly encouraged. He also reviewed the [Phase III guidelines](#) that were announced last week. Governor Northam said that unless he hears otherwise, Richmond and Northern Virginia will enter Phase III with the rest of the state.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Last week, VDH released [guidance](#) on how long-term care facilities can gradually reopen. Additionally, Governor Northam said that the Commonwealth will [direct \\$246 million](#), primarily from the CARES Act, to support long-term care facilities in their response to COVID-19. This funding includes \$152 million from the Provider Relief Fund. The funding will help address staffing shortages, infection control measures, new periodic testing requirements, and PPE. Governor Northam has also directed VDH to release the names of the long-term care facilities that have experienced outbreaks. He noted that there is room for more clarity in the law and is discussing legislative options with lawmakers. Dr. Forlano said that VDH will set up trainings on the new guidance with the facilities. On releasing the names of other businesses that have experienced outbreaks, Governor Northam said it will depend on whether or not it presents a public health risk.
- **Economic Recovery:** Governor Northam said there will be more economic announcements in the days ahead. He will also address Virginia's economic recovery more on Thursday.
- **Workplace Guidelines:** The Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) Safety and Health Codes Board will meet tomorrow to review emergency temporary standards as required under Executive Order 63. Executive Order 63 asked DOLI to implement

enforceable standards around PPE in the workplace, sanitation, record keeping, and communication. There was a 10 day public comment period that ended on Monday, June 22. The Board will meet tomorrow to review the standards and if approved, they will be posted online on Thursday. The standards will be enforceable by civil action.

June 18

On Thursday, June 18, Governor Northam made the following announcements at his biweekly press conference on COVID-19:

- **Phase III of Forward Virginia:** Governor Northam explained that while Virginia is not ready to enter Phase III, businesses need to be able to plan. He said Phase III still means Virginians are safer at home. The Governor still encourages teleworking and physical distancing. In Phase III, social gatherings may include up to 250 people. The cap on capacity for nonessential retail, restaurants, and bars will be lifted. Entertainment venues may open at 50 percent capacity with a cap of 1,000 people. Gyms may open at 75 percent capacity. Grooming services will still need to follow physical distancing requirements. Childcare facilities may be open, but overnight summer camps will remain closed. Recreational sports will still require physical distancing. Swimming pools can be opened at 75 percent capacity with physical distancing. Governor Northam emphasized that face coverings are still required. More details on Phase III will be posted online. Governor Northam said Virginia would not enter into Phase III until at least June 26, but he continues to review the data and it may be later.
- **Covid-19 Impact on Latino Communities:** Governor Northam said that Latino communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Latinos make up 45.3 percent of cases for which we have demographic data and 35 percent of hospitalizations, even though Latinos only make up 10 percent of the population in Virginia. Governor Northam said his administration is working to outreach to these communities, including translating education materials in Spanish and holding testing events in these communities. The Health Equity Working Group is tracking the data and working to help these communities. Dr. Rebecca Vargas-Jackson will lead the outreach to the Latino community in Northern Virginia. Governor Northam assured people that are undocumented that they are not checking documents at these testing events and their health is the number one priority. Governor Northam invited several community leaders to speak on this issue.

June 11

On Thursday, June 11, Governor Northam made the following announcements at his biweekly press briefing on COVID-19:

- **Data:** Virginia is not seeing a spike in cases unlike other states around the country. In fact, our metrics continue to trend downward. Total cases have been trending downward since the end of May. However, Governor Northam emphasized that virus is still with us and Virginians should be vigilant about protecting themselves and each other. Governor

Northam strongly encouraged protestors to social distance, wear face coverings, and get tested for COVID-19.

- **Higher Education:** Governor Northam said the reopening guidance for institutions of higher education is similar to the guidance given to K-12 schools earlier this week. Institutions can begin to open their campuses and offer in person instruction, but they must follow all relevant guidance. The institutions must meet certain public health conditions in order to reopen. Institutions will have to submit comprehensive reopening plans to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), which will review the plans before they can proceed with reopening. Their plans must be based on the best available public health data, including the VDH's higher education testing guidance.

Peter Blake, Director of SCHEV, announced that SCHEV received a grant from the Lumina Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to close achievement gaps in higher education. Blake said COVID-19 threatens the gains we have made in learning gaps. On the reopening plans, Blake said the guidance announced today covers all public and private institutions. Blake said each institution's plan will address the safety of the students, staff, and the communities where the institution is located. At a minimum, the plans must address the following: 1) repopulation of the campus, 2) monitoring health conditions to detect infection, 3) containment of the disease when detected, and 4) shut down considerations, including online instruction, if necessitated by severe condition or public health guidance. SCHEV stands ready to help institutions. Blake said to expect a new normal when institutions reopen. SCHEV will issue further instructions on the reopening plans tomorrow.

- **K-12 School Reopening:** Dr. Lane noted that the Governor's guidance allows the State Superintendent to "consider variance on case by case basis." He said he looks forward to seeing what school divisions propose in places where there is little transmission.
- **Broadband:** Governor Northam said expanding broadband is one his top priorities and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for broadband. He noted it will be a public private partnership.
- **May Revenue Numbers:** Governor Northam [announced](#) that May revenue collections fell by 20 percent. Governor Northam said this was slightly better than expected.

June 9

On Tuesday, June 9, Governor Northam made the following announcements at his biweekly press briefing on COVID-19:

- **Data:** Governor Northam said our health metrics are looking positive. The percent of positive tests over the past 14 days is trending downward. Hospitalizations for COVID-19 are trending downward and bed capacity and PPE supplies are sufficient. Currently, the state has 872 contact tracers and is aiming to have 1,200 in July.
- **Reopening:** Governor Northam said that Northern Virginia and Richmond can enter Phase II on Friday.

- **Schools:** Governor Northam [announced](#) that all Virginia schools will open for students next year, but the school experience will look different. The reopening of schools will come in phases and align with the Commonwealth's reopening phases outlined in Forward Virginia. The phases will allow for in person instruction, but slowly. Governor Northam said it will start with small groups and will allow each school division the flexibility it needs to respond to the needs of its own locality. These phases provide schools with options for consideration, not mandates.

Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane said the plan for K-12 public and private schools prioritizes the health and safety of students and staff. Schools will open for all students next year, and schools are required to deliver new instruction in the 2020-2021 academic year. He said some of the instruction may be delivered in person and some may be delivered via remote learning. This approach is equity focused, but moves us closer to the end goal of safe, in person instruction for all students. Dr. Lane detailed each of the three phases:

- Phase I: Instruction is predominately remote, but exceptions will be made for schools to offer in person instruction for students with disabilities. Schools may elect to provide extended school year services and school year special education services, including private placements, with strict social distancing measures. Students will only attend such programs if the individualized education program (IEP) team agrees that it is appropriate and the parents' consent.
- Phase II: Instruction is still predominately remote, but includes exceptions for Pre-K through 3rd graders, English language learners, and students with disabilities. School-based summer camps will also be allowed. Large group gatherings are limited to 50 people. Governor Northam said that most schools can enter Phase II right now.
- Phase III: In Phase III, schools can shift to in person instruction for all students, but they will need to put physical distancing measures in place. For example, schools may need to stagger schedules or blend in person instruction with remote learning. Schools should have 6 feet in between desks. Schools will have to stagger the use of community areas, such as cafeterias. Schools should have remote options for high risk students and staff. There will be daily health screenings. Students will be encouraged to wear face coverings, especially older students. Dr. Lane said Phase III may require innovative approaches to the way that students come to the building to ensure strict social distancing measures.

Governor Northam and Dr. Lane agreed that this approach protects and prioritizes the health and social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of students and staff.

Schools will have to submit plans to the Virginia Department of Education on how they will comply with these guidelines. In all phases, schools are expected to follow CDC school guidance strategies. Schools must have plans for remote options for students and staff with underlying health conditions. Social distancing measures include, but are not limited to, ensuring desks are 6 feet apart, restricting mixing groups of students, closing communal areas, screening students and staff, and using cloth face coverings.

The Virginia Department of Health guidelines requires students to be 6 feet apart on busses as well. Governor Northam said they are examining how the funding from the CARES Act can help schools that do not have as much funding to help implement guidelines.

As it relates to working families and teachers, Dr. Lane said they plans should provide flexibility to school divisions. There may be schools where they serve teachers' children on a daily basis if there is a hybrid system. Superintendents are also having discussions with community partners.

The Virginia Department of Education will send the guidelines to all school districts as well as post the guidelines online on June 10.

- **Youth Sports:** The Governor's Chief of Staff Clark Mercer gave an update on youth sports. In Phase II, shared equipment and sports that require intentional contact are prohibited. Some sports may be allowed, but not all activities are allowed. For example, karate classes are okay, but intentional contact during karate class is not okay. Ice skating is allowed, but ice dancing is not. In Phase II, the indoor field capacity is 30 percent or 50 person maximum, whichever is less. Outdoor field capacity is 50 percent or 50 person maximum, whichever is less. There is no limit for spectators at youth sports. Youth sports can begin this Friday, June 12.
- **Special Session:** Governor Northam said they will do a reforecast of the budget in the next few weeks, and the Governor anticipates a special session in early August, but cautioned that it was just a ballpark guess.

June 2

On Tuesday, June 2, Governor Northam made the following announcements at his biweekly press conference on COVID-19:

- Governor Northam said he stands with black Virginians. The Governor said this means taking actions to right historical inequities in education, in our health system, and in access to business opportunities. The work includes expanding Medicaid, introducing new tools to reduce maternal morbidity, reforming criminal justice, and making it easier to vote among other things. Governor Northam announced 4 specific actions his administration will be taking to continue to address these inequities.
 - Governor Northam said that his administration will hold virtual town halls on criminal justice reform and public safety.
 - Governor Northam will meet with the board of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police.
 - There will be statewide day of prayer, healing, and action.

- Governor Northam asked the African American Advisory Board and the Virginia Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law to continue their work of auditing Virginia's code with a focus on criminal justice and public safety.

Governor Northam invited several leaders of the African American community to speak at the press conference, including Delegate Dolores McQuinn.

- **Data:** Governor Northam said our health data continues to look good. Hospitals have enough PPE and bed capacity. Percent positivity continues on a downward trend. The number of tests have increased.
- **Phase II:** Virginia, except for Northern Virginia and Richmond, can move in to Phase II on Friday, June 6. Phase II provides more flexibility for restaurants, gyms, sports, outdoor entertainment venues, and gatherings of up to 50 people.
 - Restaurants can have indoor seating at 50 percent of their capacity.
 - Gyms can have indoor classes and workouts at 30 percent of their capacity.
 - Pools can open with restrictions.
 - Entertainment venues can reopen with restrictions.
 - Recreational sports are allowed with physical distancing requirements and no shared equipment.

Governor Northam noted that Virginians are still safer at home. Governor Northam said teleworking and physical distancing is still encouraged. Face coverings are required.

- **Child care:** The Department of Social Services is sending guidance to child care providers so they can prepare the necessary health and safety measures.

Governor Northam said his administration will have more details on entering Phase II and child care on Thursday.

May 28

On Thursday, May 28, Governor Northam made the following announcement in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- Governor Northam honored the lives lost due to the coronavirus pandemic as well as the victims of the Virginia Beach mass shooting that occurred a year ago on Sunday.
- **Reopening:** Tomorrow, the remaining localities (Northern Virginia, the City of Richmond, and Accomack County) will enter Phase I. Governor Northam said that the rest of Virginia will be in Phase I for at least another week. When asked about the timing of entering Phase II and if Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Accomack will enter Phase II with the rest of Virginia, Governor Northam said he will have discussions with leaders in those areas, but if they are ready, he would like to see all of Virginia move into Phase II together.
- **Face Covering Enforcement:** Governor Northam reminded Virginians that starting tomorrow everyone is required to wear a face covering in public. The Governor's counsel Rita Davis discussed how the face covering requirement will be enforced. She said that the enforcement mechanism in [Executive Order 63](#), which is also Order of Public Health Emergency Five, is not a new process. She said it is a statutory process in which all orders of public health emergency are enforced. There are two avenues by which VDH or any local health department can enforce the order: a civil process by which an

injunction is obtained and a warrant issued by a magistrate. Ms. Davis noted that business owners are not expected to enforce the mask requirement.

- **Testing:** Governor Northam announced that 39 CVS Pharmacies in Virginia will offer testing using self-swab kits with an employee watching to ensure the test is performed correctly. Governor Northam said this is just one partnership the state is working on to ensure testing is widely available in Virginia.
- **PPE:** The state sent out 200 shipments of PPE this week, including more than 30,000 N95 masks, 143,000 surgical masks, and almost 170,000 gloves.
- **Beaches:** Governor Northam announced that public beaches may reopen tomorrow for recreational activities. The Governor said that the reopening of Virginia Beach last weekend went smoothly, so other public beaches, using similar protocols and restrictions, may reopen.
- **NASCAR:** NASCAR and other vehicle and horse racetracks can run single day events under strict guidelines starting tomorrow. NASCAR will run a race on June 10 in Martinsville. These events will not be open to the public.
- **Microsoft:** Governor Northam announced this week that Microsoft will invest \$64 million to establish a new software development and research and development hub in Reston, VA. This will create 1,500 new jobs. Governor Northam said he expects to have additional jobs announcements in the next few days.
- **License/ID Renewal:** Governor Northam is extending the time to renew licenses or ID cards. If your license or ID expires before July 31, you'll have until August 31 to renew.
- **Title 32:** The federal government extended Title 32 status for the Virginia National Guard, which means the federal government will continue to help pay for the work the Virginia National Guard is doing.
- **Virtual Graduation:** Governor Northam is hosting a virtual graduation for all graduates tomorrow.
- **Upcoming Announcements:** Governor Northam said he will have guidance about youth sports next Tuesday. The Governor said he will have additional announcements regarding schools on Tuesday as well.

May 26

On Tuesday, May 26, Governor Northam made the following announcements regarding Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Data:** The percent positivity continues to trend downward. Virginia's hospital capacity remains sufficient, and testing is increasing. Governor Northam said that all of the numbers are trending in the right direction.
- **Reopening:** Northern Virginia has met 4 of the 6 metrics to move into Phase I as of Sunday, May 24. Northern Virginia has seen 14 days of decline in the percentage of positive tests and a decline in hospitalizations. They also continue to have enough hospital capacity. Governor Northam says he plans to let Northern Virginia enter Phase I on Friday. Governor Northam said officials from Accomack County believe they are ready to move into Phase I as well. He also noted that he has had conversations with Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney about Richmond entering a modified Phase I. Governor Northam said he will have more information on his conversations with Mayor Stoney tomorrow, so businesses have adequate time to prepare.

- **Face Coverings:** Starting on Friday, May 29, face coverings will be required inside all brick and mortar retail establishments, personal care and grooming establishments, places where people congregate, and food and beverage establishments, as well as on public transportation and when accessing state or local government services. The face covering requirement applies to everyone age 10 and older. There will be a few exceptions, including while eating or drinking, while exercising, if you have a health condition that prohibits wearing a face covering, and if you have trouble breathing or are unable to remove the mask without help. Governor Northam said face coverings help protect the people around us, especially our workers. Governor Northam noted that law enforcement will not enforce the face covering requirement. Governor Northam noted that his office may have conversations with the General Assembly to create a civil penalty for not wearing a mask when the General Assembly meets for a special session.
- **Workplace Safety:** Governor Northam announced that the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry will develop COVID-19 workplace safety emergency standards. These standards will apply to all employers and will address PPE, sanitation, access to employee exposure and medical records, and hazard pay. The standards must be approved by the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board.

May 22

On Friday, May 22, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- As of Friday, May 22, there are 34,950 cases of COVID reported in Virginia, including 4,145 hospitalizations and 1,136 deaths.
- **Testing:** Testing is expanding in Virginia; there is a new online symptom checker that will become available on the Virginia Department of Health website at vdh.virginia.gov; there are 44 testing events set up for next week. 813 new cases have been reported in the last 24-hour period as a result of expanded testing. With regards to PPS, they continue to provide updates on the aggregate information available. There are no specifics being reported as to a number of cases reported in a given long-term care facility, however asymptomatic infections in facilities has been demonstrated which is part of the reason to conduct the PPS.
- **Reopening:** The Governor will issue more guidance next Tuesday regarding the three areas of the state who have not entered into Phase I (NOVA, Richmond, Accomack County) as well as those in Phase II. Those areas that have not entered Phase I yet are reminded during Memorial Day Weekend they are still under a stay-at-home order, and therefore unless it is essential there should be no travel to and from those areas.
- **PPE:** There are discussions occurring regarding a potential mandate for PPE, such as facial protection. The Governor urged everyone to continue to be cautious and wear face masks as part of PPE. There will be a formal announcement on Tuesday regarding a potential mandate for wearing face-masks. This is also an equity issue and they are discussing ways to address the equity issue as well as enforcement.
- **SNAP:** a new online benefit for families participating in SNAP launches on May 29. The new benefit allows for families to order groceries online for delivery.
- **Unemployment:** As the unemployment rate continues to rise due to COVID-19, the Commonwealth is planning to open up a new call center with 315 new employees to assist handling unemployment requests.

- **Other:** There will be a virtual graduation ceremony for all students graduating high school in the Commonwealth airing next Friday. Members of the class of 2020 can send pictures to [VPM.org/grad](https://vpm.org/grad) photos and are asked to do so by Sunday. The Virginia War Memorial will host a virtual ceremony at 10:00 am on Monday morning. Everyone participating in Memorial Day events are cautioned to remain in groups less than 10 people, avoid large gatherings, and especially to avoid large group gatherings in parks or other outdoor areas and to wear proper facial protection. Also, the Virginia State Police will be out on the roadways this weekend so everyone should be reminded to travel safely.

May 20

On Wednesday, May 20, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Testing/Data:** Yesterday, Virginia performed over 10,000 tests (9,782 PCR tests and 426 antibody tests). The percent positivity continues trend downward. Governor Northam reviewed the ways that Virginians can get tested for COVID-19, including local clinics and community testing events. Additionally, Governor Northam noted that the state has committed \$58 million dollars that Virginia received from the CARES Act to ramp up contact tracing. VDH will hire 200 communicable disease investigators and 1,000 contact tracers.
- **PPE:** The state has distributed over 790K N95 masks, more than 1.3 million surgical masks, more than 3 million gloves, 285K gowns, over 400K face shields, and over 24K containers of hand sanitizer. The priority for the PPE state stock pile is to support the state COVID response and testing. Local health departments are helping coordinate PPE needs. The state has directed health care providers to exhaust their private supply chains, before requesting state assistance. To help providers, the Department of General Services has established a rapid review process for vendors selling COVID-19-related supplies and services. It maintains this list on www.dgs.virginia.gov. Virginia has also worked with Amazon to ensure providers get priority to purchase PPE. Additionally, FEMA is shipping PPE to nursing home facilities.
- **Healthcare:** Governor Northam said that access to healthcare is more important than ever during COVID-19, and reviewed the statistics on Virginia's Medicaid expansion. Since Governor Northam declared a state of emergency in March, almost 30K adult Virginians have enrolled in Medicaid via the expansion and an additional 23K children have been enrolled. Governor Northam announced that he was convening a new work group to continue to identify ways to reduce costs and improve the quality of healthcare coverage for all Virginians regardless of how they get insurance. Northam said that this group will build off the work of the Market Stability Work Group, which he established last year. This group made recommendations on the creation of a state-based health insurance exchange and establishing a reinsurance program in Virginia. Governor Northam also commended the General Assembly for banning balance billing. The Governor announced that he vetoed [SB 235](#), [SB 861](#), and [HB 795](#), stating that these bills would ultimately increase the cost of insurance for sicker Virginians in the marketplace. Additionally, Governor Northam said his executive leadership team on opioid addiction continues their work and behavioral health resources continue to be available. DMAS has new policies to encourage telehealth access for Medicaid members.

- **Elections:** Governor Northam said the local elections went smoothly yesterday. More than 55,000 voters voted via absentee ballots. Governor Northam encouraged the use of absentee ballots for the June elections.
- **Health Equity:** The Health Equity Work Group will participate in a town hall discussion on May 21 at 7pm on ABC.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** The goal is to test as many long-term care facilities as possible. The Virginia National Guard is coordinating with VDH to complete this testing.
- **Federal Stimulus:** Governor Northam said that the Commonwealth needs monetary resources and flexibility in a 4th federal stimulus package.

May 18

On Monday, May 18, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Testing:** The percent positivity of PCR tests, the test that detects the active virus, continues to trend downward. Governor Northam said Virginia is expanding test capacity in at-risk areas. An at-risk area is defined as places where people have an increased risk for complications from COVID-19 and incomes less than \$30,000 per year. There are several testing events in Virginia planned for Memorial Day weekend, including in Portsmouth, Petersburg, Fairfax and Alexandria. Dr. Karen Remley said she thinks we may have had 10,000 test per day already, but it takes time for the private labs to sync their data with the Commonwealth's data.
- **Beaches:** As of Friday, May 22, Governor Northam will allow the City of Virginia Beach to open its beaches to recreational activity, including sunbathing and swimming. Prohibited activities include:
 - Group sports (volleyball, football, Frisbee)
 - The use of speakers
 - Alcohol
 - Tents and groupings of umbrellas
 - Fishing on sand beaches in the Resort Area is prohibited
 - Parking garages and surface lots will be limited to 50% capacity

The Virginia Beach Access Plan considerations:

- Additional access is contingent upon successful execution of the detailed plan developed by Virginia Beach in concert with the Governor's office and state public health officials.
 - Plan includes protocols for cleaning, education, monitoring, compliance and enforcement, as well as area closures if necessary.
 - If large scale non-compliance occurs, access will be restricted.
 - First Landing State Park Bayfront beach also will be open to these activities with compliance assistance from Virginia Beach
 - All other beaches in Virginia remain open only to exercise and fishing until Phase II of Forward Virginia – coordinating with local leaders.
- **Schools:** Governor Northam noted that Virginia was the first state to close schools for the remainder of the year, which proved to be the right move he said. Governor Northam

named a team of education leaders at all levels, including State Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane, local superintendents, education officials, and University presidents. The group has been meeting regularly for the last three weeks with the public health team, and will be laying out next steps in the coming weeks.

- **Evictions:** Today, marks the first day that some courts are reopening to hear cases. This means that eviction proceedings may move forward. Governor Northam outlined the steps that his administration is taking to protect Virginians. He said his administration has worked with Virginia Housing, the state housing financing agency, to provide a 3-month mortgage deferral for those experiencing economic hardship. If you are a landlord, who has had your Virginia Housing-backed mortgage deferred, you must pass this on to your tenants. Last month, Governor Northam amended legislation to ensure that tenants can receive a 60-day deferral on an eviction proceeding, if they can show they lost wages due to COVID-19. The new legislation caps late fees at 10 percent on the periodic rent or 10 percent of the remaining balance, whichever is less. The Northam administration is also pushing the federal government to include additional rent relief in the next federal stimulus package. Governor Northam announced a new website (statyhomeVirginia.com) that has additional housing information related to COVID-19.
- **Personnel:** Dr. Jeffrey Stern, who has led the VDEM for the last 6 years, has taken a job with FEMA. His last day is June 8.
- **Elections:** Governor Northam reviewed the new safety measures for the local elections, including PPE and physical distancing.

May 15

On Friday, May 15, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Testing:** Governor Northam gave an update on how Virginia is counting the number of tests. The Virginia Department of Health has been including both the antibody test, which detects if someone has been infected in the past, and the PCR test, which detects if someone actively has the virus, in its numbers. Governor Northam ordered the VDH to separate the two tests in its count. The antibody test accounts for about 9 percent of the tests performed since February. Importantly, Governor Northam noted that when antibody tests are removed from the data, the downward trend in positive tests remains. He also noted that PCR testing capacity continues to increase. For example:
 - On April 21, there were 58 community/public testing sites, but as of May 14, there are 215 community/public sites with 52 more in the works.
 - Next week, 12 Free Clinics and 75 Federally Qualified Health Centers will have the ability to test.
 - Hospital systems, like George Mason, are conducting testing at their clinics.
 - The state lab is helping to support testing with collection kits. They have sent 500 test collection kits to Southwest Virginia.
- **Phase I:** Phase I of Forward Virginia begins today, except for Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Accomack County.

- **State Budget:** For April, Virginia's revenue collections were down 26 percent. That is about \$700 million less than the state expected to collect. The Northam administration predicts that it will see a \$1 billion loss by the end of June. Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne gave a detailed update on Virginia's finances. He said that despite experiencing a decrease of \$700 million in revenues, economic activity held up well. Approximately 60 percent of the state's revenue comes from payroll withholding, which was up 4 percent in April. This means that many businesses were continuing to pay their employees. About 20 percent of Virginia's revenues come from sales tax, and sales tax revenue was even for the month. The loss came from the delay in tax filing payments, which the Governor delayed from May 1 to June 1. Secretary Layne said that the state will use the data from this quarter to reforecast the revenues to gain a more accurate picture in July.
- **CARES Act:** On May 12, Virginia issued instructions to localities that it would distribute \$650 million from the CARES Act to be used for direct costs related to the coronavirus. This money is expected to be distributed by June 1. The administration has appropriated \$121 million for the purchase of PPE, including \$42.3 million for testing. In total, the administration has obligated \$878 million out of the \$3.1 billion it received under the CARES Act.

May 13

On Wednesday, May 13, Governor Northam announced the following updates on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Phase I:** Phase I will begin on Friday, May 15 for most of the Commonwealth. Governor Northam reviewed the industry guidance for Phase I and reiterated that Phase I is a floor, not a ceiling. Phase I for Northern Virginia will be postponed for 2 weeks. Leaders of Falls Church, Fairfax, Arlington, Loudon, Prince William, and Alexandria spoke at the press conference and reiterated the need to delay the opening of Northern Virginia. Governor Northam said if other regions would like to delay Phase I, they should follow the same procedures as Northern Virginia. Governor Northam noted that he has not heard from other regions on delaying Phase I.
- **CARES Act Funding:** Earlier this week, the Governor announced that the state is sending \$650 million to local governments to respond to the pandemic from the CARES Act. Additional federal dollars will go towards testing and contact tracing. The Virginia Department of Health is working to hire more contact tracers in each of the health regions and has received more than 3,000 resumes.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam said Virginia has about 260 long-term care facilities and the state is committed to testing all of these facilities. Governor Northam noted that it might not be in the next 2 weeks, as the White House recommended earlier this week. The nursing homes have the ability to contract via private labs, and the National Guard is also helping with testing. The Governor said this will be an ongoing process.

May 11

On Monday, May 11, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Data:** On average, testing continues to increase. The percent of positive cases continues to show a downward trend. Hospitals experiencing PPE difficulty are also on a downward trend.
- **Reopening:** While no region may move faster to ease restrictions, regions may move more slowly. Northern Virginia localities (Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria, Prince William, and Loudon) sent Governor Northam a formal letter demonstrating that the localities are unified in requesting a delay for the start of Phase 1 of Forward Virginia, Governor Northam's reopening plan. The date on which Northern Virginia will begin Phase I is to be determined. For the rest of the state, Governor Northam said he will make an official announcement on Wednesday, but anticipates that the state will reopen on Friday, May 15.
- **Testing in Underserved Communities:** Dr. Underwood, Virginia's Chief Diversity Officer, gave an update on the Healthy Equity Taskforce and the Health Equity Working Group. She said the taskforce provides leadership to the Health Equity Working Group, which was established at the onset of Virginia's COVID-19 outbreak. The purpose of the taskforce and working group is to ensure a health equity lens is applied to all decision-making within Virginia's COVID-19 response. Dr. Underwood leads the taskforce, and Sable Nelson, Acting Director of the Office of Health Equity at VDH, serves as the chair of the working group. One of the priorities of the taskforce is to collaborate with local governments to provide support for vulnerable communities. The taskforce provides localities with training, PPE, culturally appropriate education materials, and support in identifying neighborhoods at elevated risk. The taskforce is helping distribute masks and hand sanitizer in a Richmond City pilot program, which the taskforce hopes to expand.
- **Testing:** Governor Northam hopes to have additional testing news in the coming days about testing partnerships. Governor Northam said the state plans to work with retail stores to increase community testing. Dr. Remley, head of Virginia's testing working group, said that Virginia is working to provide the best public health data, which can be gathered from 10,000 tests per day. She noted that 10,000 tests per day is about 2-4 percent of the population.
- **Utilities:** Dr. Norm Oliver issued a public health certification that prevents the City of Petersburg from shutting off water service to any occupied dwelling and requires the city to restore service to 46 homes.
- **DMV:** Governor Northam extended the DMV closures for at least the next week. Online services remain open.
- **Elections:** Governor Northam reminded Virginians that tomorrow, May 12, is the last day to request an absentee ballot for the May 19 local elections. Governor Northam encouraged everyone to use absentee ballots.
- **Contract Tracing:** VDH currently has over 600 tracers and is working to get to over 1,000 tracers in the next 2-4 weeks.

May 8

On Friday, May 8, Governor Northam provided additional details on Phase I of Forward Virginia, a blueprint for easing health restrictions. The Governor said he hopes Phase I will begin on

Friday, May 15, but if trends change, he will push the date back. He is using the following data to determine timing: percent positive cases, PPE supply, hospital bed capacity, hospitalizations, and the rate at which positive cases are doubling.

Phase I of Forward Virginia

- Key components of Phase I:
 - Safer at home – especially if you are vulnerable
 - The stay at home order will change to a safer at home order.
 - No social gatherings of more than 10 individuals
 - Continued social distancing
 - Continued teleworking
 - Face coverings recommended in public
 - Easing limits on business and faith communities
- Industry guidance:
 - **Non-essential retail**, which has been limited to a 10 person maximum capacity, will now be able to operate at 50 percent capacity.
 - **Restaurants and beverage services** can use their outdoor seating at 50 percent capacity.
 - **Entertainment and amusement businesses** as well as **gyms** will remain closed, but outdoor fitness classes can occur.
 - **Beaches** will remain open for exercise and fishing only.
 - **Places of worship**, which have had a 10-person limit, may hold services indoors at 50 percent capacity and continue to hold drive-in services.
 - **Personal grooming businesses** can reopen by appointment only. Strict social distancing measures must be used as well as face coverings.
 - **Private campgrounds** may open with restrictions on distance between campsites. **State parks** can open for day use only. Overnight use will be opened in phases at a later date.
 - **Child care centers** can remain open.
 - **Overnight summer camps** will remain closed.
- Timing: Phase I will last at least 2 weeks. Decisions will be based on the health data mentioned above. If there is a surge in cases, restrictions could be reinstated.
- Governor Northam emphasized that Phase I restrictions are a floor, not a ceiling, and localities may delay the start of Phase I.
- If a business cannot meet restrictions, the business must remain closed.
- Governor Northam said business restrictions are meant to protect workers as much as customers. He asked the federal government via the Virginia Congressional delegation to grant states more flexibility with unemployment benefits to help workers who are vulnerable. Governor Northam said he will have more information for people who cannot return to work due to health conditions or living with vulnerable people before entering Phase I.

Testing

- Dr. Clifford Deal, President of the Medical Society of Virginia, announced that the Medical Society of Virginia is partnering with the Virginia Department of Health to ensure healthcare providers have the resources they need to test patients.

- Dr. Remley, head of the testing workgroup, hopes to get to 10,000 tests per day by the end of next week. She does not expect to hit 10,000 tests per day every day, due to weekends and other factors.

Long-term Care Facilities

- Dr. Forlano said that at this time, visitation restrictions at long-term care facilities need to remain in place.
- There is a draft bill that would change the code to allow the state to release facility-specific information. Governor Northam said he supports more transparency, but can't comment on the specific bill as it will likely change before it gets to his desk for signature.

May 6

On Wednesday, May 6, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Reopening Plan:** Governor Northam announced that he will provide additional guidance for businesses on Friday. He also said his administration is working with localities. Northam emphasized that Forward Virginia, the 3-phase plan to reopen Virginia, should be considered the floor of restrictions, so if local governments wish to put in place additional restrictions to ensure safety, they may do so.
- **Virginia National Guard:** Our next steps depend on testing, tracking, and the ability to quarantine. The Governor remains concerned about the outbreaks at the poultry plants on the Eastern Shore. The Virginia Health Department will be increasing testing in the communities surrounding these plants with the help of the Virginia National Guard. The National Guard is also helping with testing in underserved areas throughout Virginia. Governor Northam noted that the federal government is currently helping to pay for the Virginia National Guard under Title 31 status. Virginia has Title 31 status until the end of May, but Governor Northam asked President Trump to further extend this status. Major General Tim Williams of the Virginia National Guard gave an update on the National Guard's work during the pandemic, including helping with testing, food distribution, and PPE distribution.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** The Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association announced that they will assist facilities with staffing, testing, and PPE. The National Guard is helping with testing at long-term care facilities, but it is not the only means of testing at these facilities.
- **High-risk Populations:** The Health Equity Working Group has organized a donation of masks and hand sanitizer to neighborhoods with high-risk populations. The group also helped with distributing information about the virus in different languages.
- **Department of Justice:** Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran noted that there hasn't been a new case of COVID-19 in almost two weeks at the Department of Juvenile Justice, Bon Air facility. He also noted that the DJJ has reduced the population at this facility to a historic low. Additionally, the Department of Justice plans to increase testing at all facilities.
- **CARES Act:** Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne said there are approximately 50 different income streams from the CARES Act. That amounts to about \$15 billion for

Virginia; however, this includes the PPP loan program. Virginia received approximately \$3.1 billion in direct funds from the CARES Act. This money has strict guidelines on how it can be used, but it can be used for testing. The Northam administration plans to release guidance on how the money will be allocated this week.

May 4

On Monday, May 4, Governor Northam announced that he will extend [Executive Order 53](#), which imposed temporary restrictions on businesses, through Thursday, May 14. EO 53 was originally set to expire on April 23, but was extended through May 8. In addition, Governor Northam said he will adjust [Executive Order 55](#), the stay-at-home order, to reflect it is “safer at home.”

Governor Northam said that Virginia has flattened the curve and hospitals have not been overwhelmed. However, he noted that the virus will still be with us until there is a vaccine. Because of this, Virginia will slowly reopen in 3 phases. Governor Northam outlined those phases today:

Phase I

- Key components of Phase I:
 - Safer at home – especially if you are vulnerable
 - No social gatherings of more than 10 individuals
 - Continued social distancing
 - Continued teleworking
 - Face coverings recommended in public
 - Easing limits on business and faith communities
- Phase I includes guidelines for businesses to enhance physical distancing, cleaning, and promote workplace safety. To promote physical distancing, companies should establish policies to keep coworkers and customers physically separated with clear signs indicating the rules. It means limiting conferences and large gatherings. It may also mean wearing face coverings at work. To protect workers, routine breaks are needed so workers can wash their hands frequently. In addition, the Administration will be releasing industry specific guidelines for restaurants, retail, fitness, personal care, grooming, and entertainment industries.
- Bottom line: You’ll be able to get a haircut, but you’ll need an appointment and there will be additional safety measures. You’ll be able to go out to eat again, but restaurants will use less of their seating to ensure people can be physically distanced. You can go to the gym, but with fewer people and increased cleaning measures. Farmers markets will have more flexibilities with foot traffic and prepared foods. Churches and houses of worship will be able to gather.
- Timing: Phase I could last 2-4 weeks, or longer. Governor Northam suggested it could be 3 weeks.

Phase II

- Key components of Phase II:
 - Stay-at-home for vulnerable populations
 - No social gatherings of more than 50 individuals
 - Continued social distancing

- Continued teleworking
 - Face coverings recommended in public
 - Further easing business limitations
- Timing: Phase II could be 2-4 weeks, as long as the health data supports it.

Phase III

- To move to Phase III, there will need to be no evidence of rebound for a sustained period of time.
- Key components of Phase III:
 - Safer at home for vulnerable populations
 - Remove ban on social gatherings
 - Remove capacity limits in establishments
 - Continued heightened cleaning and disinfection
 - Possible other measures
- Timing: Phase III could be 10-12 weeks away.

Governor Northam noted health data that shows Virginia's cases continue to rise, but cautioned that it was in part due to more testing. Over the weekend, Virginia tested more than 6,000 people per day. Governor Northam also noted that he is confident in the supply chain to have enough PPE and testing supplies, but will continue to monitor this data as well as positive cases and hospitalizations.

Dr. Megan Healy, Virginia's Workforce Development Officer, emphasized that as people go back to work, workplace safety is their top priority. She said Virginia is waiting on guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor on unemployment eligibility criteria should a worker not feel safe returning to work due to health conditions or other factors.

May 1

- **Data:** Governor Northam said Virginians have slowed the spread of COVID-19. While cases continue to climb, so does testing. Hospitalization rates remain steady. Governor Northam announced that FEMA is sending three units that can decontaminate up to 240K masks per day. These units will be located in Blacksburg, Richmond, and Hampton Roads. These systems should be operational in the next week.
- **Testing:** Governor Northam noted that Virginia has increased testing. Yesterday, more than 5,800 were tested for COVID-19. The Governor encouraged physicians to test their patients with COVID-19 symptoms. Next week, Virginia will release guidance to physicians on testing possible COVID-19 patients. Dr. Remley, head of Virginia's testing workgroup, gave a detailed update on testing.
 - Dr. Remley noted that testing is a multi-step process. She said the most important step is being able to find where a test can be performed. The VDH website has an interactive map to find the nearest testing site.
 - The CDC updated its guidance on how the tests can be performed. This new guidance allows the patient to perform their own swab, which uses less PPE and allows for the state to increase testing locations. Additionally, the guidance allows additional swabs to be used, which will help expand accessibility.

- Virginia has contracted with two private labs in the Commonwealth as well as a lab in North Carolina, which will allow Virginia to increase our testing by 3,000 tests per day.
- Dr. Remley said we are currently in Phase 2 of testing, which means we are testing more than 5,000 people per day. Remley said that PPE and testing supplies are no longer an issue and now the focus is on education and “bringing people to the table.”
- Next Steps: VDH will use private labs to do up to 5,000 more tests per week. Local health districts will prioritize and implement drive-thrus and other local strategies. Local governments will be able to tests their essential workers. Coordinate necessary PPE and testing kits to 56 free clinics and 150+ Federally Qualified Health Centers to rapidly test high-risk populations. Urge hospital systems to launch community testing immediately. Launch PSA campaign message.
- **Reopening:** Governor Northam said he would have a more detailed update on Phase 1 of the reopening plan on Monday, May 4.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Two weeks ago, Governor Northam appointed a long-term care facilities taskforce to ensure nursing homes and long-term care facilities have the resources they need to protect patients and staff. This group has been setting up testing at these facilities when there are two or more positive cases. Facilities can request testing through their local health departments, and Governor Northam encouraged facilities to request testing if they have an outbreak. The Virginia National Guard is available to help with this testing if needed. Dr. Norm Oliver said that they do not name specific facilities that have outbreaks because the Virginia code prohibits it.
- **Census:** Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to complete the census.
- **Asian American and Pacific Islander Month:** May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Month. Governor Northam said since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people of Asian descent have faced increased bigotry and harassment. He said Asian American and Pacific Islander Month comes at an appropriate time to remind us of how unacceptable that is.
- **National Foster Care Month:** May is also National Foster Care Month. Governor Northam thanked social workers who continue to work every day to protect vulnerable children.
- **Education:** The Virginia Department of Education has allocated the \$238.6 million in federal funding for school divisions that the state received through the CARES Act – 90% will go directly to local school divisions and the remaining 10% will go to the statewide efforts to increase access to technology and support students, families, and educators. As for schools reopening in the fall, Governor Northam said he is confident that they will if we keep doing what we are doing.
- **Small Businesses:** The tax on Virginia’s games of skill will go towards a COVID-19 relief fund that will help small businesses.

April 29

On Wednesday, April 29, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia’s COVID-19 response:

- **Meat Processing:** Governor Northam noted that President Trump evoked the Defense Production Act to allow meat processing facilities to stay open. The CDC team that Governor Northam announced on Monday arrived in Virginia yesterday and is working to ensure the poultry facilities are following CDC guidelines. Governor Northam emphasized that his priority is to ensure the health of the workers at these facilities. Northam hopes that the federal government will play a larger role in helping keep workers at these facilities safe and provide federal support to ensure every worker has PPE. The Governor instructed the Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Labor and Industry to work with the plants to ensure they implement the CDC guidelines.
- **Elective Surgeries:** [Public Health Order 2](#) temporarily prohibited elective surgeries and limited dental procedures. Governor Northam announced that elective surgeries and dental services can safely resume when the order expires tomorrow at midnight. Governor Northam noted that the Virginia Dental Association issued new guidelines to members yesterday to ensure the safety of patients and health professionals. Governor Northam also noted that many veterinary clinics voluntarily stopped any surgeries that required PPE. He said Virginia Veterinarians are allowed to resume services.
- **Student Loans:** Governor Northam announced that Virginia is joining several other states in an initiative that will help over 200K Virginians with commercial Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program loans, Perkins loans, or privately held student loans. Lenders will provide a minimum of 90 days forbearance on loans and waive late payment fees, among other actions.
- **Testing:** Dr. Remley, head of the testing workgroup, will give an update on Friday, May 1. Dr. Remley noted that Virginia is creating a database of labs that can do testing to ensure capacity is being utilized. Governor Northam announced that FEMA is sending Virginia an additional 200K test swabs.
- **Data:** Case data will now be reported by zip code.
- **Schools:** Governor Northam said that his administration is working to ensure children can return to school in the fall.
- **Reopening:** One of the reopening criteria is a 14 day decline in positive tests, and Governor Northam noted that his administration is examining trends in positive cases. The Governor said that the number of cases has not flattened yet, but it varies by region. He said his team is taking this into consideration as they develop the reopening plan.

April 27

On Monday, April 27, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **PPE:** Virginia received 800K gloves and 300K surgical masks as part of a shipment from Northfield today. In addition, FEMA is sending 14K test swabs to the state lab and cloth masks for critical infrastructure workers. To date, the Department of Corrections has made 470K masks, which are being distributed to state employees.
- **Testing:** There has been a 41% increase in testing over the last week. The state is currently testing about 4,000 people per day. The Department of Health has been doing testing in public housing neighborhoods in Richmond as part of a pilot project with local health departments to ensure that people who are vulnerable are able to access tests. As part of this project, the state is also providing PPE and information about accessing

healthcare. On Wednesday, Dr. Remley, head of the testing workgroup, will give a more detailed update on testing.

- **Meat Processing:** Virginia has 10 poultry processing facilities. Last week, the data from the Eastern Shore health district, where many of these poultry plants are located, began to show a rise in cases among workers at poultry processing facilities. Governor Northam noted that these poultry facilities are vital to our food supply and provide poultry to millions of people, but the health of the workers in these plants is critically important. He voiced concern for the continued rise in cases. On Friday, Governor Northam joined Governor Hogan of Maryland and Governor Carney of Delaware in writing a letter to President Trump asking the federal government for assistance and a fully coordinated approach for dealing with this situation. The CDC has committed to deploying teams on the ground in all three states. A team, which will include epidemiologists, contact tracers, and language specialists, is expected to be in Virginia today. The CDC team will work with VDH and the local health department. Governor Northam expects the CDC to do an overall assessment of the situation and do wide scale testing to determine the scope of the problem. Yesterday, the CDC announced new guidance for meat processing facilities.
- **Vaccinations:** Governor Northam encouraged parents to vaccinate their children. He noted that due to COVID-19, the state is seeing a decline in immunizations.
- **Behavioral Health:** Governor Northam said he expects the demand for behavioral health services to increase as a result of COVID-19. He announced that Virginia has received a \$2 million grant from the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to start addressing the behavioral health impacts of COVID-19. The grant money will go through the Community Services Boards (CSB) and the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association. Governor Northam explained that the grant will help CSBs continue to provide outpatient treatment via telehealth. It will also help provide medication assisted treatment for opioid addictions along with recovery services and housing.
- **GO Virginia:** GO Virginia will use \$14.6 million in its funding for a new economic resilience and recovery program. That money will go through GO Virginia Regional Councils for initiatives that will help support business needs caused by the pandemic.
- **CTB:** The Commonwealth Transportation Board has approved the allocation of \$100 million in federal public transportation funding that Virginia received through the CARES Act. This will help offset revenue losses that local governments and transit agencies are experiencing.
- **Elections:** Governor Northam reminded everyone that the May 5 local elections have been postponed to May 19. He said that additional safety measures will be used, including PPE for poll workers
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Dr. Norm Oliver noted that 113 of 199 total outbreaks are in long-term care facilities. He said that the long-term care taskforce is working to step up surveillance in nursing homes and provide mitigation.

April 24

On Friday, April 24, 2020, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- **Elections:** The General Assembly did not move the May 5 local elections to November as Governor Northam proposed. Therefore, Governor Northam signed an executive order to move the May 5 elections to May 19. He noted that the Governor is allowed to move the elections by two weeks. Absentee voting dates will be extended as well.
- **Jobs:** Last week, more than 82,000 people filed for unemployment benefits. While almost half a million people have filed for unemployment benefits in Virginia, Virginia has the 10th lowest claims per labor force in the U.S. On Saturday, Virginia launched the Pandemic Unemployment Assistant Program, which allows gig workers and independent contractors to receive benefits. More than 50,000 Virginians have filed under that program and should see benefits next week. Governor Northam noted that Virginia worked with Microsoft and Virginia Interactive to launch a portal to better serve individuals making unemployment claims, and the Virginia Employment Commission has been a national leader in ensuring Virginians receive these benefits as soon as possible.
- **Reopening:** Yesterday, Governor Northam extended the elective surgery ban until May 1 and extended DMV closures until May 11 (see press release [here](#)). He emphasized that his administration is working towards easing some restrictions, but Virginia isn't there yet.

Governor Northam noted that testing is a key component of reopening Virginia and asked Dr. Remley, co-leader of the state's testing workgroup, to review the 5 step testing strategy the Commonwealth is using. Virginia is currently at Step 2, which calls for about 4,000 tests per day and includes high-risk people. Step 3 calls for about 7,500 tests per day, and Step 4 calls for about 10,000 tests per day and will test asymptomatic people. Step 5 will see a drop in tests per day to about 2,600, as most cases have likely been identified by that point. Governor Northam noted that lack of supplies and the lack of physicians performing the tests are key challenges to their testing strategy.

In order to begin Phase I of the reopening plan, the percentage of positive tests and the number of hospitalizations must track downwards over 14 days. In addition, the Commonwealth must have enough hospital beds and PPE. Governor Northam said social distancing will continue in Phase 1, as will teleworking and the use of face coverings. Governor Northam announced the COVID-19 Business Taskforce that will provide guidance on how best to ease restrictions on businesses (see press release [here](#)). Northam said that Virginia will have overarching rules for businesses as well as industry specific guidance. The Governor suggested that Phase I could begin as soon as May 8, but no sooner.

April 20

On Monday, April 20, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Testing:** To ensure Virginia's testing efforts are coordinated, Governor Northam announced the creation of a testing workgroup, which will be led by Dr. Karen Remley and Dr. Lilian Peake. The workgroup will include representatives from the hospital association, long-term care facilities, emergency room physicians, free clinics, private

labs, the Department of Health, and the Department of Emergency Management. The workgroup will focus on three things:

- Expand test sites and testing criteria (Current criteria focuses on individuals who are hospitalized, individuals that have been exposed to known cases, emergency responders, and those in long-term care facilities or are about to enter long-term care facilities)
- Increase testing volume and timeliness to decrease backlog and keep up with demand
- Address the factors that limit testing (i.e. not enough supplies, viral transport)

The state is also encouraging doctors that have symptomatic patients to test their patients as supply allows. Due to lack of testing, Governor Northam noted that many doctors have been relying on a clinical diagnosis rather than a test. Today, Dr. Norman Oliver will send a clinician letter encouraging doctors to test those patients. Additionally, the CDC will send teams to each state to focus on testing vulnerable populations. The CDC is also allowing state labs to approve new tests. The CDC is helping states obtain more swabs and allowing more flexibilities in the testing components that states use.

- **Data:** Governor Northam announced that the Department of Health will expand the data it shares with the public. It will share the number of cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities by locality. It will also share this data and demographic data at the health district level.
- **Executive Order 57:** Governor Northam noted that [EO 57](#) did not include physician's assistants and said it was an oversight.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Long-term care facilities represent the majority of the outbreaks in the Commonwealth (55 percent). Cases in long-term care facilities represent about 10 percent of the cases in the Commonwealth. The long-term care facilities taskforce is working with facilities that have not yet experienced an outbreak on infection control. The taskforce will be working with the CDC on virtual assessments for infection control. The taskforce plans to deploy Virginia Department of Health employees to facilities that are in the early stages of an outbreak to do onsite infection control assessments. Dr. Forlano, who leads the taskforce, said the taskforce plans to issue guidance on removing residents from long-term care facilities and how to best make that decision and ensure the safety of the resident.

April 17

On Friday, April 17, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Reopening Plans:** Governor Northam said the White House's guidelines for the reopening of states are consistent with what Virginia is doing and will continue to do. Northam noted that the phased-in approach requires positive test to be on a downward trend for 14 days, and Virginia has not yet met that criteria. Virginia received \$1.6 billion in federal stimulus funds to use for the COVID-19 response and to aid local governments. Virginia also received approval from FEMA to provide hotel accommodations for first responders and essential personnel working to combat the COVID-19 epidemic.
- **PPE:** Hospitals continue to need PPE. The first shipment from Northfield arrived in Virginia and is being distributed. This shipment includes more than 24K N95 masks as well as gloves and gowns. National supply chain issues remain and Virginia continues to diversify its suppliers.

- **Staffing:** Governor Northam signed [Executive Order 57](#), which eases licensing restrictions on some medical professionals, such as nurse practitioners and doctors from other states. It also allows for the expanded use of telehealth. EO 57 enables Virginia-licensed nurse practitioners with two or more years of clinical experience to practice without a collaborative agreement. Out of state doctors will also be able to practice in certain Virginia facilities. The press release on EO 57 can be found [here](#).
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam announced he is waiving regulatory rules around staffing to ensure that facilities can recruit staff and volunteers more quickly. The state is also connecting Virginia Medical Reserve Corps volunteers with facilities to help fill staffing needs. The state plans to reach out to local health systems that have furloughed workers to encourage them to help. Virginia is also expanding testing criteria to include people that are about to be admitted into congregate settings, like long-term care facilities. Governor Northam noted that any facility that is experiencing an outbreak will be able to test every resident and staff. UVA and VCU are partnering with the state to provide these tests to the long-term care facilities along with the state lab.
- **Department of Corrections:** Governor Northam announced a 67 percent decrease in the number of people entering jails on misdemeanor charges as a result of guidance he issued to local criminal justice officials. Since early March, the local jail population has decreased 17 percent. The press release on this announcement can be found [here](#).
- **Jobs:** Virginia had more than 410K unemployment claims in the last month. Governor Northam said they have added call centers in Grundy and Newport News, 50 additional employees, and a private call center to help keep up with the demand.
- **Remote Voting:** Governor Northam said he was open to General Assembly using remote voting measures and commended Speaker Filler-Corn for looking into that option. Northam noted that there is a possibility for a special session in July, August, or September after the state is able to reforecast state revenue.
- **Elective procedures:** Governor Northam said he hopes to allow elective procedures as soon as they can be done safely and there is enough PPE. On March 25, Governor Northam issued an [Order of Public Health](#) to stop elective surgeries until April 24, 2020. He noted that they have not made a decision on extending the date for elective procedures, but said that Virginia will coordinate with its surrounding states on that date.

April 15

On Wednesday, April 15, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Executive Order 53:** Governor Northam is extending [Executive Order 53](#) for two more weeks. It will now expire on May 8, 2020. It was originally supposed to expire on April 23, 2020. Governor Northam emphasized that the stay at home order is in effect until June 10. He also emphasized that things will not go back to how they were before the pandemic, suggesting that the new normal will include covering your face, spending more time at home, teleworking, and avoiding large gatherings. Governor Northam said that the business community will be involved in the conversation to ease restrictions in Virginia. The Governor noted that Virginia had a strong economy before the virus. For example, March general fund revenues were 10.8 percent higher than last year.

- **Childcare:** Governor Northam announced that \$70 million from the CARES Act will go to support essential workers with children under the age of 12 and early childhood education. Specifically, the money will go towards:
 - Direct flexible cash assistance to the centers that have remained open
 - Preparing schools to serve as emergency childcare centers where needed
 - Eliminating copayments until June for families that are receiving federal childcare subsidy dollars
 - Making additional funding available to centers that accept federal subsidy dollars but have closed

Additional information for providers and parents can be found at www.childcareva.com.

- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam said that the state is doing everything it can at Canterbury Rehabilitation Center and other long-term care facilities. Governor Northam noted that these facilities face challenges with PPE, testing, and staffing. Northam also noted that adequate funding is a challenge, but hopes his budget amendment to address this issue will be approved. Dr. Laurie Forlano, who is leading a long-term care taskforce, noted that the taskforce is developing a systems level approach to strategically respond to outbreaks.

April 13

On Monday, April 13, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- **Data:** There 5,747 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia. Dr. Norman Oliver, the state health commissioner, said Virginia is one of 12 states that reports race and ethnicity data and noted that Virginia is trying to improve the collection of this data.
- **Modeling:** The University of Virginia created a Virginia-specific model, which shows that our social distancing measures are working. Virginians are slowing the spread of the virus. UVA's model also show that Virginia hospitals will be able to handle the surge of patients that are predicted. Governor Northam emphasized that the model shows that if we lift social distancing measures too soon, numbers will spike and there could be a second wave and peak. Governor Northam said he will lift the stay at home order when it is safe to do so.
- **Education:** The state is making additional educational resources available to teachers and students. Governor Northam announced that the state is expanding Virtual Virginia, Virginia's online education platform, to allow every teacher in the Commonwealth to host virtual classes through June 30. Northam noted that students without internet access can download content and use it offline. In addition, four Virginia public media stations launched VA TV Classroom today. The Department of Education also released [new guidance](#) for teachers and schools on high quality equitable instruction during the pandemic. The guidance is a result of the Continuity of Learning Taskforce that the Department of Education convened to issue guidance on how schools can prevent the widening of achievement gaps and meet the social and emotional needs of students while schools are closed.
- **Nursing Homes and Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam noted that he proposed a budget amendment to increase rates paid to nursing homes and long-term

care facilities by an additional \$20 per Medicaid recipient per day, which will help these facilities address staffing issues during the pandemic. Governor Northam said his administration is also looking at how the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps can help staff long-term care facilities. Dr. Laurie Forlano noted that the data dashboard for long-term care facilities is updated on the website. Of the 97 outbreaks that have been reported, 53 of them have been in long-term care facilities. At least 554 cases are at long-term care facilities. Dr. Forlano said they learned of an outbreak in a facility over the weekend and the taskforce was able to help ensure testing capacity, mobilize staffing, and obtain PPE. The taskforce in general will continue to work on policy solutions to sustain that kind of response in the future. When asked about family notification, Dr. Forlano noted that family notification is done at the facility level and the taskforce will continue to recommend that facilities keep families informed. The taskforce is contemplating how to empower facilities with the right communication tools to help with family notification.

- **Legislative:** Governor Northam noted that he reviewed 1,291 bills by Saturday night. Northam said he proposed 144 amendments to the state budget. Eighty-three (83) of the amendments freeze discretionary spending of \$874.6 million in FY21 and \$1.4 billion in FY22. Forty-nine (49) amendments are language amendments that relax specific requirements and give flexibilities to agencies and institutions of higher education as they conduct business during COVID-19. Governor Northam also recommended delaying the prohibition of games of skill for a year and recommended taxing them. The estimated revenue for taxing games of skill for a year is \$125-\$150 million. Governor Northam proposed that the tax revenue be used for homelessness, healthcare needs, and small businesses.
- **Recreational and Entertainment Businesses:** Governor Northam noted that on Wednesday he will make an announcement about the date on which recreational and entertainment businesses, such as salons and barbershops, will be able to reopen. [Executive Order 53](#) required these businesses to close until Thursday, April 23; however, Governor Northam said this date will be extended.

April 10

On Friday, April 10, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- **Nursing Homes:** Governor Northam is giving Dr. Laurie Forlano, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health at the Virginia Department of Health, a larger role in leading Virginia's efforts to help nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Dr. Forlano will lead a taskforce made up of several secretariats and agencies that will focus on 3 tasks:
 - (1) work with Secretary of Finance to ensure nursing homes and long-term care facilities have the resources they need to fight COVID-19;
 - (2) work with facilities to strengthen staffing and increase infection control measures, including ensuring these facilities have enough testing and PPE;
 - (3) ensure the public and the facilities are getting the information and data they need about this virus.

Governor Northam emphasized that Dr. Forlano will ensure that Virginia is doing everything it can to help these facilities. Additionally, Dr. Forlano gave an update on long-term care facility data. As of today, there are 45 outbreaks in long-term care facilities. There are 525 cases in long-term care facilities, representing about 10 percent

of all cases in Virginia. Dr. Forlano noted that this data is based off an outbreak system, and may not track exactly with the disease surveillance system that is on the VDH website. VDH is building additional tools to track the data.

- **PPE/Staffing:** Governor Northam said Virginia is using more avenues to recruit additional medical volunteers through the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps. The Corps now has 13,000 volunteers. Governor Northam is going to reach out to Virginia's colleges, universities, and medical schools to recruit additional volunteers. Governor Northam encouraged nurses, nurse practitioners, and nursing students to apply. Regarding the oversight relationship between nurse practitioners and doctors, Governor Northam said the current relationship is working and Virginia will continue to work within that model, but encouraged those with issues to reach out to his administration. Additionally, Governor Northam suggested that hospitals should reach out to VCU, so they can adopt their innovative method to clean and reuse N95 masks.
- **Department of Corrections:** Governor Northam is proposing an amendment to the state budget that would give the Department of Corrections the authority to release offenders with one year or less remaining in their sentences. The offenders must not be a threat to public safety and also must demonstrate good behavior. The amendment will have an emergency clause, so it will go into effect immediately should the General Assembly approve it and it will last for the duration of the Governor's Executive Order. The General Assembly will vote on the amendment when they reconvene on April 22. Between now and then, the DOC will implement reentry planning for these individuals. This includes ensuring the released person has somewhere to go and has the medications they need for 3 months. Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran noted that the amendment would apply to approximately 2,000 offenders.
- **Unemployment:** Governor Northam said this health crisis has led to an economic crisis. During the last week of March, 114K people applied for unemployment benefits, and last week, over 147K people filed for unemployment. In total, over 306K people have applied for unemployment in the last three weeks in Virginia. Last week alone, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) issued more than 191,000 payments totaling more than \$57 million. Governor Northam said Virginia will launch the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program next week, which will increase weekly payments by \$600. This program allows Virginia to provide unemployment benefits to those who didn't previously qualify (gig workers, self-employed, etc.). As a result of the increased claim volumes, VEC is hiring more staff, hiring a private call center, and upgrading the website.
- **Budget/Legislative Update:** Governor Northam said that by tomorrow night, he will have acted on all of the legislation before him, complying with his April 11 deadline. When asked about the General Assembly reconvening, Governor Northam noted that the House will meet outdoors under a tent and the Senate will meet at the Science Museum to ensure social distancing requirements are maintained.

April 8

On Wednesday, April 8, Governor Northam gave the following updates on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 3,645 cases of COVID-19.

- **PPE:** Virginia continues to distribute PPE, including masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer, and coveralls, to hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical facilities. No Virginia hospital has run out of PPE yet, but hospitals and health providers worry they don't have enough PPE. Virginia is preparing for all scenarios.
- **Elections:** Virginia has local and Congressional primary elections coming up in May and June, respectively. Governor Northam noted that voting is a fundamental right, but that no person should have to choose between their health and voting. Governor Northam said that holding in person elections right now would put the health of Virginians at risk. Therefore, Governor Northam is recommending that the May local elections be moved to November. This recommendation will require General Assembly action when they reconvene on April 22. Governor Northam is also moving the June 9 primary election to June 23. He noted that the governor has the authority to move primary elections back by two weeks, so this does not require General Assembly action.
- **Health Data:** Governor Northam has directed the Virginia Department of Health to track racial demographic data of confirmed cases. He said his administration is also exploring ways to ensure that private testing labs track racial demographic data as well.
- **Budget/Legislative Update:** Governor Northam said his administration has been reviewing the hundreds of bills passed by the General Assembly. He noted that he must sign, amend, or veto legislation before midnight on Saturday, April 11, and he will meet that deadline. Governor Northam said the budget cannot move forward as passed since Virginia is expecting a recession with a drastic reduction in revenues and large increases in spending to fight the pandemic. Governor Northam noted that he is working with budget leaders on amendments that will allow Virginia to deal with the changing revenue situation. The Governor stated that he will have another legislative update on Friday.
- **Restaurants:** Governor Northam directed the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to defer annual fees for licenses and permits that would be up for renewal through June. This affects about 6,000 establishments with ABC licenses. The governor also directed ABC that establishments with mixed beverage licenses will be allowed to sell mixed beverages through takeout or delivery effective midnight on Thursday, April 9.

April 6

On Monday, April 6, 2020, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 2,878 cases of COVID-19.
- Governor Northam advised Virginians to wear a face covering in public per CDC guidelines.
- The Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is using genetic technology to help public health officials better understand COVID-19. One insight they have learned is that the virus was introduced in Virginia in multiple communities rather than spreading from one source. DCLS is one of the first public health labs in the nation to do this work. Governor Northam said DCLS's work will help give us more tools to fight COVID-19.
- Governor Northam said that build out on the 3 alternative care sites (Dulles Expo Center, Richmond Convention Center, and Hampton Roads Convention Center) will begin this week.
- Virginia has executed a \$27 million contract with Northfield, a Virginia-based logistics company, to provide PPE. The first shipment of PPE will arrive a week from today.

Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran said this is just the first of many purchases of PPE.

- Virginia has also signed a contract with Estes Trucking to handle logistics and distribution.
- Virginia shipped 56K MREs (Meal, Ready-to-Eat) to food banks, which will supply the food banks for the next six weeks.
- VDH shipped the 3rd round of PPE to hospitals from the national stockpile.

April 3

On Friday, April 3, Governor Northam made the following announcements related to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 2,012 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia. The CDC noted this week that Virginia has widespread community transmission.
- Yesterday, the federal government approved Virginia's federal disaster declaration, which will provide additional federal funding for equipment and supplies. Additionally, it will help provide shelter for 1,500 homeless Virginians. FEMA is providing funding for food, cleaning supplies, and medical transportation.
- Governor Northam approved the Army Corps of Engineers's final recommendations for alternative care sites:
 - Dulles Expo Center, which can handle 315 acute or 510 non-acute beds (Governor Northam previously suggested that the ExxonMobil facility in Northern Virginia would be the alternative care site.)
 - Richmond Convention Center, which can accommodate 432 acute beds or 758 non-acute beds
 - Hampton Roads Convention Center, which can accommodate 360 acute beds or 580 non-acute beds.

The next steps are to complete contracts, design, and construction. The Governor expects the alternative care sites to be ready in about 6 weeks.

- This week, over 114K people applied for unemployment benefits. Virginia has expanded server capacity and call centers to help meet the demand.
- Governor Northam said the state is facing a recession, and it will have major impacts on the state budget. Governor Northam stated that "we can expect to have significantly less revenue than even our most pessimistic forecasts." He noted that federal funding from the disaster declaration and the stimulus bills will help, but it won't be enough. As a result, yesterday, Governor Northam directed state agency heads to eliminate discretionary spending for the remainder of the fiscal year and to prepare for budget cuts in the next budget cycle. Governor Northam also directed budget experts to reexamine funding that was planned for new initiatives and avoid any new commitments.
- Governor Northam said the state has developed additional guidance for faith communities, urging them to use alternative means of worship, such as virtual or drive-in gatherings.

April 1

On Wednesday, April 1, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- There are currently 1,484 confirmed COVID-19 cases. There are 305 people hospitalized in Virginia due to COVID-19.
- Governor Northam said that models indicate that the surge in cases in Virginia will be in late April to late May.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer reviewed 41 sites and has identified 3 emergency hospital sites in Virginia:
 - ExxonMobil facility in Fairfax, which is next door to Inova Fairfax Hospital
 - Hampton Convention Center, which is near Sentara Hospital and Riverside Hospital
 - A site in the Richmond area, which will be announced on Friday
- Virginia received its 3rd shipment of PPE from the national stockpile, but Virginia still needs more PPE.
- Governor Northam noted that during the stay at home order, Virginia is scheduled to hold two elections - local elections in May and Congressional primaries in June. The Governor said voting is an essential right and the state is working through options on how to hold the elections. Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to use absentee voting in the meantime. Governor Northam said that elections are vitally important, and he will ensure that they are held.
- Governor Northam noted that April 1 is Census Day. He encouraged Virginians to complete the census as it determines how federal funding is distributed to states, which is more important than ever due to COVID-19.
- At the press conference on Friday, Governor Northam will announce guidelines and suggestions from Virginia's faith leaders on religious services. Governor Northam suggested online or drive-in services.
- Governor Northam noted that he is looking at several pieces of legislation regarding Virginia's business environment. He said he is seeking input from bill patrons and stakeholders and will make a decision that is in the best interest of Virginia and our economy.
- Two Virginia Department of Corrections facilities have been affected by the coronavirus. The Department of Corrections is following CDC guidelines at these facilities.

March 30

On Monday, March 30, Governor Northam issued [Executive Order 55](#), a "stay at home" order. Importantly, [Executive Order 53](#), which Governor Northam signed last week, remains in effect.

Executive Order 55 orders Virginians to remain at their place of residence, except for the following purposes: grocery shopping, obtaining food or beverages, seeking medical attention or governmental services, seeking assistance from law enforcement, outdoor activities (provided it complies with social distancing requirements), taking care of individuals or visiting family, traveling for child visitation, traveling to work or places of worship, volunteering with charitable or social services organization, and leaving due to reasonable fear for health or safety.

The order also requires institutions of higher education to cease all in-person classes and instruction and cancel all gatherings of more than 10 individuals. The order also closes public

beaches for all activity, except exercising and fishing, and privately-owned campgrounds for overnight stays of less than 14 nights. All indoor and outdoor gatherings of more than 10 individuals are prohibited.

Executive Order 55 is effective immediately and will remain in effect until June 10, 2020, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

At a press conference on Monday announcing the order, Governor Northam also gave the following updates on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 1,020 cases of COVID-19.
- Virginia continues to look for ways to increase hospital capacity. Virginia hospitals currently have a total of 18,500 beds (2,000 ICU beds). Virginia hospitals are identifying ways to increase capacity, and the Army Corps of Engineers are expected to have site recommendations for emergency hospitals in the coming days.
- Virginia has received USDA approval for the state's household disaster feeding program so that the Virginia foodbank network can offer assistance to anyone in need of food, not just those that meet the income guidelines.

The next press conference is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1 at 2:00 PM.

March 27

On Friday, March 27, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- As of today, there are 604 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Governor Northam emphasized that Virginians need to continue to social distance as it is the only way to slow the spread of the virus. He said Virginians need to stay home for the next few weeks at a minimum. The Governor reminded everyone that localities have full authority to enforce social distancing orders.
- Governor Northam said Virginia does not have enough PPE, but is actively working to get more. In the meantime, Governor Northam called for a national solution and called on President Trump to use the Defense Production Act to increase supplies.
- Governor Northam, Maryland Governor Hogan, and Washington, DC Mayor Bowser are also calling on President Trump to set up a federal testing site for the greater Washington region.
- The Governor thanked private businesses in Virginia that have donated PPE and asked for companies that wish to donate PPE to visit www.virginia.gov/covid19.
- Governor Northam noted that Virginia has made a request for funding for the Virginia National Guard. The Virginia National Guard is currently helping with logistics and delivering supplies, but stand ready to be called on for additional action.
- Virginia Finance Secretary Layne said Virginia will receive about \$3.3 billion from the federal stimulus package that Congress passed today.

March 25

On Wednesday, March 25, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 391 positive cases in Virginia. Governor Northam said the numbers are a result of increased testing and community spread.
- Governor Northam gave an update on Virginia's healthcare capacity, including medical professionals, equipment, and beds.
 - Virginia is exploring ways to make it easier for qualified medical professionals to help during the pandemic, including reworking Virginia's licensing procedures and considering the use of medical students. Governor Northam said the state will make better use of the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps. The VMRC has more than 8,000 deployable volunteers. Governor Northam asked medical professionals that are licensed or students that are interested in volunteering to go to the VMRC website.
 - Governor Northam said he has encouraged medical providers to postpone elective surgeries. Today, Governor Northam will sign an executive order directing them to do so. Northam explained that this will preserve bed space and PPE.
 - Governor Northam said we need a national response due to price increases as states are competing for equipment.
 - To address bed capacity, Governor Northam spoke with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who can build emergency hospitals on sites that the state identifies for them should the need arise. Those sites will be announced when they are decided.
- Virginia state parks will be day-use only starting Friday morning. Campgrounds, cabins, and bath houses will close.
- The state is also working with the federal government to get additional federal dollars to families that qualify for SNAP benefits as a result of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act that Congress passed last week.
- Secretary Layne gave an overview of the \$2 trillion federal stimulus package that Congress will likely pass this week, and encouraged Congress to pass it quickly.
 - The package includes \$250 billion in direct payments to individuals, \$250 billion in enhanced unemployment benefits, \$130 billion for aid to hospitals, \$350 billion for loans and aid to small businesses, \$500 billion to large businesses, and \$150 billion in state and local aid.
- Governor Northam emphasized that residents need to stay home and encouraged Jerry Falwell to reconsider his message that invites students to return to Liberty University.

March 24

On March 24, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are currently 290 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Virginia is working to ensure hospitals and medical providers have the equipment they need. Virginia received the first shipment of PPE from the national stockpile. Virginia has also ordered a shipment of PPE from a company overseas. Government officials are working with Virginia businesses to use their manufacturing lines to create PPE.

Governor Northam commended the public and private sectors for being creative. For example, some Virginia distillers are making hand sanitizer, and the Department of Corrections is making masks. Virginia is also working to secure more ventilators.

- Governor Northam spoke with Maryland Gov. Hogan and Washington, D.C. Mayor Bowser on ways the region can work together and share medical equipment, such as ventilators.

Governor Northam announced that the press conferences will be held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 2:00PM moving forward.

March 23

On March 23, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 254 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Governor Northam signed [Executive Order 53](#), which orders the closure of certain non-essential businesses, bans all gatherings of more than 10 people, and closes all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year. The order goes into effect at 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 and will remain in place until 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 23, 2020.
- Governor Northam directed all schools – private and public – to remain closed for the remainder of the academic year. School divisions will decide how students will learn the information they were meant to cover for the remainder of the year. By tomorrow, the Department of Education will issue guidance to help school divisions plan and ensure that every student is served equitably. Governor Northam reiterated that Virginia is working on waivers for testing requirements.
- The Governor called for a public-private partnership to provide care for the children of essential workers. The Department of Education and the Department of Social Services will issue guidance today on how to provide childcare services for essential personnel.
- Under the Executive Order, recreation and entertainment businesses must close; dining and on-site alcohol establishments can continue to offer delivery and/or takeout services; retail business can open but must adhere to social distancing requirements; professional businesses must utilize telework as much as possible.
- Last week, 40K people filed for unemployment in Virginia.

The press release of the Governor's announcement can be found [here](#). The text of Executive Order 53 can be found [here](#).

March 22

On March 22, Governor Northam and his administration made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- Virginia has a total of 219 cases of COVID-19 as of today.
- VDEM shipped a major supply of PPE to emergency medical services, health districts, and hospitals yesterday.

- Virginia is actively reaching out to companies for help making and distributing PPE. Governor Northam called on Virginia companies with manufacturing, logistics and supply chain expertise to help.
- Governor Northam called for hospitals to reschedule elective surgeries. He said many hospitals have already done so.
- The Governor encouraged Virginians to telework and use telehealth services.
- The Department of Corrections is providing two free phone calls to inmates per week, since all in-person visitation has been suspended due to COVID-19. Transfers to prisons have also been suspended.
- Governor Northam said they will likely have additional guidance for schools tomorrow, March 23.

Governor Northam announced that he will move his daily press conference to 2 pm starting tomorrow.

March 21

On March 21, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- Virginia's testing criteria will give additional priority to medical professionals that have cared for someone with COVID-19. They are also easing testing criteria for those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.
- Virginia is pursuing every opportunity to secure the necessary medical supplies. Secretary Carey said some manufacturers in Virginia may be able to make masks quickly, and Virginia is pursuing all options. Secretary Carey emphasized the need for a national solution as well.
- The Governor signed an executive order last night that will allow hospitals and nursing homes more flexibility to add beds during this situation. The order lifts the certificate of public need restrictions so that our health commissioner can give hospitals and nursing homes the authority to add more beds without red tape.
- The Virginia Department of Education is preparing a waiver to exempt Virginia students from federal testing requirements, following the U.S. Department of Education's announcement that it will grant waivers to states.
- The Northam administration is also considering actions necessary to provide relief to students on state-mandated SOL tests.
- Attorney General Mark Herring issued an opinion that says that public bodies may conduct meetings electronically, if the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency.

March 20

On March 20, Governor Northam held his daily press conference to provide updates on Virginia's COVID-19 response. As of today, there are 114 cases, 19 hospitalizations, and 2 deaths in Virginia. Virginia has more than 1,000 tests available as of today.

Governor Northam thanked businesses and restaurants that are abiding by the social distancing restrictions. He said for those restaurants and businesses that are not complying, localities have the authority to enforce the restrictions. He also said that Virginia ABC has granted restaurants the ability to sell beer and wine for takeout.

Yesterday, over 16K jobless claims came in. Dr. Megan Healy, Chief Workforce Development Officer, said the Virginia Employment Commission is increasing its capacity. It has expanded call centers and online server capacity. Additionally, the Governor has waived the waiting week and work search requirements to be considered for unemployment benefits. Dr. Healy said the Department of Labor is changing the rules daily on who can apply for unemployment benefits, so she encouraged everyone that has lost their job to apply.

Finally, Governor Northam encouraged all Virginians to complete their census form.

March 19

Today, the Governor announced several actions in response to COVID-19:

- Businesses will be able to request an extension of February sales tax returns, which are due tomorrow, until April 20. Businesses will have to pay interest. This will cost the state \$145M and about \$30M will be felt by localities.
- While the tax filing deadline for individuals and corporations will remain the same, the payment deadline has been extended until June 1, 2020. Additional guidance on this as well as the sales tax returns extension will be posted on the tax commissioners website later this afternoon.
- The Governor directed the state police to suspend motor vehicle inspections for the next 60 days.
- As of yesterday, there are 10K unemployment claims in Virginia. The Governor said they are taking steps to ensure people don't have to wait a week to apply for unemployment.
- Virginia's application to the Small Business Administration to allow small businesses to apply for loans was approved.
- The Department of Corrections is suspending in-person meetings
- The Virginia Medicaid program is eliminating copays for services, extending prescription refills for 90 days, and enhancing telehealth options.

Governor of Virginia – Executive Orders related to COVID-19

Updated 4.13.2020

- [State of Emergency declared](#)
- [Health Emergency Order Prohibiting More than 10 Patrons in Restaurants, Fitness Centers and Theaters](#)
- [Gov. Northam Announces Additional Actions to Address COVID-19](#)
- [Executive Order 52 Increases in Hospital Bed Capacity in Response to Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [Amended Order of the Governor and State Health Commissioner Declaration of Public Health Emergency](#)
- [Executive Order 53 Temporary Restrictions on Restaurants, Recreational, Entertainment, Gatherings, Non-essential Retail Businesses, and Closure of K-12 Schools Due to Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Order of Public Health Emergency Two](#)
- [Executive Order 54 Delegation of Authority to Commissioner of the Virginia Employment Commission](#)
- [Executive Order 55 Temporary Stay at Home Order Due to Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [Executive Directive Ten Authorizing the Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to Take Certain Administrative Action Due to the Novel Coronavirus](#)

Virginia State Action on COVID-19

April 28

[Virginia General Assembly Permits Local Governments to Meet Electronically](#)

The Virginia General Assembly recently authorized public bodies — including local boards and commissions — to meet electronically during the state of emergency declared by Gov. Ralph Northam in response to COVID-19. This clarifies and expands the previous authority for boards, authorities, planning commissions and other public bodies to meet and take action even when they cannot otherwise meet in person due to social distancing requirements.

April 10

[Northam Quietly Signs Hundreds of Bills As Deadline Looms](#)

Gov. Ralph Northam's thrice-weekly press conferences on the COVID-19 pandemic have become a grim fixture of Virginia political life. But behind closed doors, Northam has quietly continued a more traditional duty: reviewing and signing legislation. He's signed more than 800 pieces of legislation ranging from the symbolic, including a bill creating a "non-binary" gender option on driver's license applications, to the obscure, such as a bill making it a misdemeanor to leave dead animals in churches.

Black Caucus urges Northam to sign wage increase despite pressure to hold off amid coronavirus crisis

Members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus called on Gov. Ralph Northam to sign legislation that would raise the minimum wage, protect the environment and fight racial disparity even as the cost of the coronavirus crisis pressures him to hold off.

GOP weighs options for 7th District convention

Under normal circumstances, Republican candidates across Virginia's 7th Congressional District would be heading into the final stretch of campaigning in advance of their party's April 25 convention, when delegates were scheduled to meet at the Arthur Ashe Center in Richmond and select a nominee for November's general election. COVID-19 has turned that plan on its ear.

ACLU, others call for urgent prison and jail releases in response to COVID-19

The ACLU of Virginia is calling for the quick release of any jail or prison inmate who does not pose "a demonstrable, imminent threat of bodily harm to others," in light of the threat posed behind bars by COVID-19.

State extends ban on utility cut-offs into June

The State Corporation Commission has extended an order barring utilities from cutting off electricity, natural gas, water or sewer service to non-paying customers during the coronavirus pandemic. The ban, which had been set to expire May 15, has been pushed back to June 14.

DMV turns shuttered weigh stations into rest areas for truckers

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles announced Thursday that truckers may use weigh stations as rest areas. All 13 of the commonwealth's weigh stations were closed until at least April 23, but an increasing number of commercial drivers are delivering food and supplies where needed as COVID-19 continues its grip on the nation.

HRT temporarily suspends fares

Hampton Roads Transit says it plans to temporarily suspend all transit fares for HRT services effective Friday, April 10, 2020, according to a press release. The suspension will continue until June 10, 2020 unless modified or or stopped.

Area colleges and universities to receive more than \$20 million in emergency grant funds

More than \$6 billion will be distributed immediately to colleges and universities nationwide to provide grants to college students whose lives and educations have been disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak, according to a press release from the U.S. Department of Education.

Area colleges and universities will see more than \$20 million in emergency funding. Three local colleges and universities will see more than \$1 million in funds: Liberty University's total allocation is more than \$15 million, University of Lynchburg will receive more than \$1.9 million and Central Virginia Community College will receive more than \$1.8 million.

Virginia medical providers want liability protections during the COVID-19 pandemic

A group of 19 Virginia medical associations sent a letter to Gov. Ralph Northam on Tuesday, requesting legal protections for their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter, signed by such major industry players as the Medical Society of Virginia and Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, includes a draft executive order and calls on Northam to declare "civil and criminal immunity to health care providers that act in good faith" while responding to the ongoing crisis.

Farm to table, via driver's window: Drive-thru farmers' market to open

On most weekends, a trip to the farmers market includes a leisurely stroll among vendors, sampling a just-picked-and-sliced apple or skewering a tiny piece of cheese with a toothpick, and going home with bags of fresh produce grown on local farms. But when a popular farmers market opens April 18 in Fauquier County, Virginia, business that's normally conducted in a large parking lot on Fifth Street, in historic Warrenton, will be adapted to a drive-thru market, including a series of three parking lots along Main Street.

April 9

Nation's only doctor governor offers sober voice on virus

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam and his top aides were having a meeting about the coronavirus when the discussion turned to neckties. The governor said he had read a study in a medical journal showing that ties worn by doctors at hospitals can host harmful germs and help spread disease. So Northam issued an informal edict to his staff: Keep the ties in the closet until further notice.

Governor: Elections scheduled for this spring won't proceed as planned

Virginia elections scheduled for this spring won't proceed as planned, Gov. Ralph Northam said Wednesday. Local elections set for next month will be pushed to November, pending action from the General Assembly, Northam said. He is also pushing the June Congressional primaries back two weeks, from June 9 to June 23.

Northam recommends moving municipal elections to November

Gov. Ralph Northam announced Wednesday that he is recommending postponing the May 5 municipal elections to November and delaying the June 9 congressional primaries by two weeks out of a concern about people voting in person during the coronavirus pandemic.

Virginia launches educational 'VA TV Classroom' teacher-led instruction

In Virginia, four public media television stations will soon air classroom instruction in response to social distancing and schools closing for the remainder of the academic year, according to a statement released on Wednesday. . . . The Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane announced that the Department of Education has partnered with Blue Ridge PBS, VPM, WETA and WHRO Public Media to make this possible.

Va. to allow takeout, delivery cocktails

Gov. Ralph Northam has directed the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to allow businesses with mixed-beverage licenses, such as restaurants and distilleries, to sell mixed drinks on a takeout and delivery basis. The directive, announced Wednesday, goes into effect Friday.

April 8

Governor Northam Announces Plans to Postpone Upcoming Virginia Elections in Response to COVID-19

Governor Ralph Northam today requested the General Assembly move the May General Election and all special elections scheduled for May 5, 2020 to the November 3, 2020 General Election date to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Governor is also exercising his statutory authority (§ 24.2-603.1 of the Code of Virginia) to move the June primary elections from June 9, 2020 to June 23, 2020.

Governor Northam Announces Additional Actions Providing Relief for Restaurants and Distilleries Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic

Governor Ralph Northam today issued an executive directive authorizing the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (ABC) to defer annual fees for licenses and permits that would be up for renewal through June. The Governor also directed the Virginia ABC to allow establishments with mixed beverage licenses, such as restaurants and distilleries, to sell mixed beverages through takeout or delivery, effective at midnight Thursday.

Virginia Attorney General asks state to extend suspension of utility disconnection through June 10

Attorney General Mark Herring has asked the State Corporation Commission to extend its mandated suspension of utility disconnections for non-payment and suspended late charges through June 10.

Northam to postpone action on teacher raises, tuition freeze

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam plans to delay some long-sought Democratic priorities until more is known about the pandemic's affect on the economy, pushing back decisions on whether to give teachers and state workers raises, freeze in-state college tuition, and implement other new

spending in budget recently passed by lawmakers. Clark Mercer, the governor's chief of staff, said Tuesday that too little is known about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

Virginia Senate plans to convene at Science Museum conference hall during April veto session

To protect members and staff from COVID-19, the Virginia Senate will trade its clubby confines at the state Capitol for an airy conference hall at the Science Museum of Virginia when the legislature returns to Richmond for its spring session April 22. Unlike the House of Delegates, which announced last week it would convene outdoors, possibly on the Capitol grounds, the Senate will meet indoors.

Virginia schools will be able to keep millions in federal money

Virginia schools will now be able to keep millions in federal education money they would have had to give back with schools closed for the rest of the academic year. The change was granted under flexibility given to the state by the U.S. Department of Education.

Virginia Dems in Congress ask Trump for flexibility on relief money for state and local governments

Virginia Democrats in Congress have asked President Donald Trump's administration for guidance to state and local governments that gives them more flexibility in spending an estimated \$3.3 billion in emergency relief from the stimulus package signed into law in late March.

Amid widespread closures, clinics and health providers turn to telehealth

With state and federal regulations and recommendations against continuing routine checkups and elective surgeries, health practitioners are closing their doors — but some are offering different telehealth options to keep up with patients during the pandemic.

State Psychiatric Hospitals Work to Contain Coronavirus

State psychiatric hospitals are starting to see cases of COVID-19. As of Tuesday, these include one confirmed staff case at Central State Hospital in Petersburg, and one resident case at the Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation about an hour from Richmond in Burkeville, Virginia. There's also one confirmed staff case at Western State Hospital in Staunton and two staff cases at Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Marion.

April 7

Governor to call 'timeout' on budget, suspend all new spending

Gov. Ralph Northam will suspend all new spending in the pending two-year, \$135 billion state budget and divert planned deposits in the state's reserves to pay for essential services in the public health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

[Virginia to get more protective medical gear via \\$27 million deal with a private supplier](#)

Gov. Ralph Northam announced Monday that the state has reached a \$27 million deal with the medical logistics company Northfield as part of an effort to relieve what he described as a “severe shortage” of personal protective equipment in Virginia and across the country. . . . Monday marked the first time Virginia officials provided details on their efforts to supply more protective equipment since the state’s first confirmed case of COVID-19, the disease caused by a new coronavirus, on March 7.

[Northam recommends wearing masks to help prevent coronavirus spread](#)

Following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, Gov. Ralph Northam urged people to wear masks when leaving the house to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. At a press conference in Richmond Monday, Northam said wearing a mask doesn’t mean social distancing measures can be relaxed. “No one should assume that if they wear a face covering, they are safe and can go about their business as usual,” he said.

[Booze delivered: Virginia ABC to allow distilleries to ship directly to consumers](#)

The Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority is now allowing distilleries to ship spirits directly to in-state consumers. The temporary change is an effort to help distilleries suffering from financial hardship during the coronavirus pandemic. This change applies only the distilleries that have existing agreements with ABC to produce and sell their products at their site.

April 6

[Virginia Uses Genetic Technology to Combat COVID-19, State public health laboratory is one of the first in the nation to do this work](#)

Governor Ralph Northam today announced that the Department of General Services’ (DGS) Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is one of the first public health labs in the nation to use genetic technology to help public health officials better understand and track the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

[Northam orders hiring freeze, agency heads to look for cuts](#)

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam is instituting a hiring freeze of state employees and is telling agency heads to look for ways to cut budgets in response to the coronavirus. Northam chief of staff Clark Mercer told agency heads in a Thursday memo obtained by The Associated Press that a recession is coming and the state revenues will be far below “even our most pessimistic forecast” from last year.

[Democrats' call for vote-by-mail grows; ACLU warns against closing polls](#)

A push to expand vote-by-mail in Virginia amid COVID-19 is gaining momentum among Democratic lawmakers and state election officials, but how far the changes should go is a source of debate. A growing coalition of Democratic lawmakers is advocating universal vote-by-mail in which virtually all voters would cast ballots from home in the May 5 municipal elections and June 9 primary elections.

State taps Greater Richmond Convention Center, two other sites, to become field hospitals

The Greater Richmond Convention Center is among three venues Gov. Ralph Northam on Friday announced as sites for field hospitals that would bring more than 1,800 hospital beds online as the state braces for a surge in COVID-19 patients. Northam tapped the Dulles Expo Center in Northern Virginia and the Hampton Roads Convention Center in addition to the Richmond site.

Dulles Expo Center selected as alternate care hospital site in northern Virginia Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) on Friday announced that the Dulles Expo Center in Fairfax County has been selected as an alternate care facility that may hold approximately 315 acute or 500 non-acute beds. Construction of the alternate care site is expected to take around six weeks. The governor said the site is intended to free up capacity at existing hospitals during the coronavirus pandemic.

Virginia House planning to convene outdoors for veto session, Speaker says

The Virginia House of Delegates will reconvene for a scheduled veto session on April 22 despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but when it does, it will likely be outdoors, House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn said in an interview with the Richmond Times-Dispatch on Friday.

Virginia Board of Education clears hurdles for high school seniors to graduate this spring

There's good news out of Richmond for high school seniors: The Virginia Board of Education approved two emergency measures on Thursday to waive temporarily certain rules that would otherwise prevent students from earning high school credits for courses interrupted by the extended school closures. These actions give Virginia school districts additional leeway to allow the class of 2020 to graduate on time and younger students to advance to the next grade.

March 25

GOP candidate sues Virginia election officials, says coronavirus thwarted efforts to get ballot signatures

A candidate seeking the Republican nomination to run against U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D) has filed a lawsuit against Virginia election officials that argues the COVID-19 pandemic has made it too difficult to gather the petition signatures necessary to qualify for the June primary ballot.

Omari Faulkner, a Navy reservist and former Georgetown University basketball player, filed the suit in the Richmond Circuit Court this week.

Northam splits with Trump on timeframe for recovery

Gov. Ralph Northam on Tuesday batted down a suggestion from President Donald Trump that the nation's economy could be "open by Easter." Hours later, the Richmond area reported its first two coronavirus deaths, pushing Virginia's statewide toll to at least nine. "While it would be nice to say that this will be behind us in two weeks, that's really not what the data tells us," Northam said in a briefing with reporters.

Virginia offers flexibility so high school seniors can still graduate

Guidance from the Virginia Department of Education released after Gov. Ralph Northam ordered state schools to be closed for the rest of the school year provides leniency so members of the senior class can still graduate.

Courts are scrambling to address coronavirus

Courts across Virginia have been forced to rapidly escalate their planning and communication processes over the past two weeks in an effort to avoid public gatherings and therefore to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

Virginia ABC stores to cut operating hours effective Friday

Virginia ABC stores will open late and close early for a deep cleaning in response to the spread of coronavirus.

March 24

Northam cancels school year, orders some businesses closed

Virginia public schools will remain closed for the rest of the current school year and certain types of businesses, like bowling alleys, salons, gyms and theaters, must close in response to the coronavirus outbreak, Gov. Ralph Northam said Monday.

Virginia may take \$1 billion annual revenue hit in new budget

Virginia's top finance official says the state is likely to lose \$1 billion in revenue in each year of the pending two-year budget — and that's the best scenario, assuming significant aid from the federal government for workers and business owners who have lost their livelihoods because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Governors Clamp Down as Trump Considers Easing Virus Plans

Governors and mayors across the U.S. issued orders to shut down normal human contact and commercial life even as the Trump administration debates dialing back guidance that officials fear is smothering the economy.

[Staggered schedules, moving desks: How 109,000 state employees are working during coronavirus](#)

While Gov. Ralph Northam is banning groups of more than 10 people from gathering, and encouraging people to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic, more than 109,000 state employees are getting creative with their workspaces.

[Northam orders some businesses to close as state's COVID-19 death toll reaches 7](#)

Gov. Ralph Northam on Monday ordered bowling alleys, theaters, barber shops, gyms and spas to close in order to help slow the spread of the coronavirus that has so far killed seven Virginians and hospitalized at least 38.

[A list of essential and nonessential businesses in Virginia, according to the governor](#)

The following recreation and entertainment businesses are considered nonessential and must close to the public beginning at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, according to Gov. Ralph Northam: theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues, museums and other indoor entertainment centers.

[Virginia K-12 schools closed for remainder of academic year](#)

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam on Monday ordered the state's K-12 schools to remain closed for the rest of the school year. "School closures are necessary to minimize the speed at which COVID-19 spreads and protect the capacity of our health care system," he said.

March 23

[Virginia Governor Issues Executive Order Addressing Schools, Businesses, and Large Gatherings](#)

Executive Order 53 closes K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year, bans gatherings of 10 or more, and creates temporary business restrictions.

[Northam: Prepare for coronavirus outbreak to last months](#)

As health officials reported 67 new coronavirus cases in Virginia — bringing the total to 219, the biggest jump yet

[As Va. jobless claims soar, economists expect hit to state's economy](#)

Solid economic data is hard to come by so far about the severity and extent of damage to Virginia's economy from the coronavirus outbreak, but anecdotal reports coming to economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond do indicate a sudden and major hit to employment especially for businesses such as restaurants and hotels.

Va. attorney general: Local governments must continue to meet in person during outbreak

Local governments scrambling to conduct board and council meetings while respecting social distancing and coronavirus safety concerns were provided little leeway by an opinion on the matter from Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring.

Region's legislators credit Northam for crisis response, see budget adjustments coming

Members of the General Assembly delegation for the Roanoke and New River valleys credit Gov. Ralph Northam for his coronavirus outbreak response, but remain unsure about how to balance protecting public health with keeping businesses afloat.

Virginia ABC allowing all restaurants with on-premises licenses to sell wine and beer to go

Any restaurant in Virginia with a valid license to sell wine and beer on-premises can now sell wine and beer to go and for delivery without applying for additional permits.

Virginia will cancel SOLs this year because of the coronavirus

Virginia students and teachers won't have to worry about Standards of Learning tests this spring.

Virginia's retirement plan for teachers and government workers says it is weathering market turmoil

Financial markets are in turmoil, but the retirement plan that covers Virginia teachers, state employees and most local government staff has just completed processing the payments to retirees it will be sending out April 1.

March 20

Virginia small businesses eligible to apply for coronavirus disaster loans

Virginia small businesses are now eligible to apply for financial assistance due to the impact of the spreading coronavirus.

Governor faces calls for special session, 'bolder and swifter action' on COVID-19

After adjourning a historic legislative session last week, a few Democratic lawmakers crossed Capitol Square to stand with Gov. Ralph Northam at a news conference about the state's response to COVID-19. Then they left town and went home to their districts. Then the world changed.

DEQ suspends routine fieldwork but will continue pipeline monitoring through contractors

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has suspended all routine fieldwork, including regular inspections and in-person monitoring, for two weeks in the face of the continuing spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus.

March 19

Governor Northam Announces Additional Actions to Address COVID-19

Co-pays eliminated for all Medicaid-covered services, tax relief, small businesses can begin applying for low-interest federal disaster loans

Virginia to extend May 1 tax deadline for all individuals and businesses

Virginia will allow all individuals and businesses to delay paying their 2019 income taxes by 30 days, bumping the deadline to pay from May 1 to June 1

Insurers waiving testing, telemedicine fees

Virginia health insurers say members who need screening and testing to see if they are infected with the COVID-19 coronavirus won't be asked for the usual co-pay or other cost-sharing

Unemployment Benefits for Workers Impacted by Coronavirus in DC, Maryland, Virginia

Workers are facing financial hardship as businesses either shut down or reduce their hours over the coronavirus

VDOE seeks federal SOL testing waiver during coronavirus crisis

Amid statewide school closures due to the threat of coronavirus, the Virginia Department of Education has requested a federal waiver for students slated to take the Virginia Standards of Learning tests this spring

In letter to Northam, Fairfax offers suggestions to help fight coronavirus

Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax sent a letter to Gov. Ralph Northam voicing his opinion on what steps the state should implement during the coronavirus pandemic

Virginia officials asking law enforcement to avoid arrests when possible

Virginia state officials are asking law enforcement agencies to avoid arrests when possible, amid calls from civil rights groups about jail conditions amid the COVID-19 outbreak

[Virginia GOP Delays Convention to Pick Trump as Nominee; The Republican Party of Virginia has postponed its upcoming statewide convention due to the coronavirus](#)

The Republican Party of Virginia has postponed its upcoming statewide convention due to the coronavirus.

[DMV shopping malls shut down amid coronavirus concerns](#)

Simon Properties and Westfield stores have temporarily closed stores in Maryland and Virginia

March 18

[Clearer picture arrives of economic toll of coronavirus](#)

The economic toll of the coronavirus pandemic became clearer Tuesday as layoffs and furloughs in the hospitality and service industries continue to mount in Greater Washington

[State allocates additional \\$11M to struggling transit systems](#)

Commonwealth Transportation Board funds are aimed at helping transit agencies recover from ridership losses and other COVID-19-related operating expenses

[Universities, colleges cancel graduation ceremonies amid pandemic](#)

Public, private and community colleges have canceled commencement

[Pentagon wants USNS Comfort ready to deploy to New York](#)

The Defense Department wants the Norfolk-based hospital ship USNS Comfort to get ready to deploy to New York in an effort to aid civilian hospitals that may need to relocate patients who aren't diagnosed with coronavirus

March 17

[Governor Northam Announces New Measures to Combat COVID-19 and Support Impacted Virginians](#)

Directs adherence to 10-person gathering ban, quarantine for high-risk individuals, worker and employer support

[Governor Northam Declares Public Health Emergency](#)

March 12

Governor Northam Declares State of Emergency, Outlines Additional Measures to Combat COVID-19

Governor issues guidance on large events and state workforce, activates long-term economic plan

Virginia Local Action on COVID-19

April 28

Virginia General Assembly Permits Local Governments to Meet Electronically

The Virginia General Assembly recently authorized public bodies — including local boards and commissions — to meet electronically during the state of emergency declared by Gov. Ralph Northam in response to COVID-19. This clarifies and expands the previous authority for boards, authorities, planning commissions and other public bodies to meet and take action even when they cannot otherwise meet in person due to social distancing requirements.

April 10

Fairfax County considers early release of jail inmates during pandemic

Fairfax County, Virginia's top prosecutor took a bold step toward reviewing who needs to be in the county's jail in hopes of reducing the number of people confined in a space that could easily become a breeding ground for the novel coronavirus. Along with limiting the defendants coming into the system, Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said his office will review the case of every individual serving a sentence in jail on a case-by-case basis to determine if they are eligible for early release.

Richmond Council approves virtual meetings in response to COVID-19

The Richmond City Council will cease in-person public hearings and hold electronic meetings about business it deems critical through the COVID-19 pandemic. The council approved new guidelines at a special meeting Thursday so the city's public bodies can continue meeting during the state of emergency.

County cuts proposed budget by \$50 million

A planned November 2020 bond referendum is being put on hold, and several other capital projects have been delayed indefinitely as the Chesterfield County government marshals resources to fund operations in the face of a nationwide economic crisis fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hampton launches small business loan program, extensions on tax bills to those affected by coronavirus

For those hit hardest by the pandemic, Hampton is offering some people more time to pay their tax bills and a loan forgiveness program for small businesses. The Hampton City Council — voting unanimously during an electronic meeting Wednesday night — approved a loan and grant forgiveness program that will be managed by the Economic Development Authority, City Manager Mary Bunting said.

Williamsburg City Council addresses budget in light of the coronavirus

Along with the economic downturn brought about the coronavirus pandemic, local governments are finding themselves re-evaluating budgets as they continue to provide vital services to their residents. Take Williamsburg for instance. Despite creating a strong budget in January, the Williamsburg City Council finds itself reassessing its financial strategy for the end of 2020 and the entirety of 2021 to accommodate changes to the economy as a result of the coronavirus.

Closures raise concerns for Northumberland

While some counties are doing all right with recent state closures aimed to fight COVID-19, these closures have pretty much shut down Northumberland County. The school year is canceled, the courts are closed and public offices are closed to the public. Churches have canceled services and activities and public events have been called off.

April 9

Local governments in D.C. region revise budgets, halt projects

Alexandria officials have begun placing long-awaited projects such as a new Waterfront Park on hold. The D.C. government has frozen hiring and will forgo salary increases. And in Montgomery County, a proposal for a supplemental property tax increase is dead. The financial impact of the shutdown of businesses and organizations caused by the coronavirus pandemic is quickly coming into view.

Supervisor asks DOJ to investigate Riverside jail

A member of the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors is asking the U.S. Department of Justice to initiate a civil rights investigation of Riverside Regional Jail. In a letter to Eric S. Dreiband, an assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's civil rights division, Clover Hill District Supervisor Chris Winslow alleges "pervasive, open and egregious" violations of the civil rights of men and women incarcerated at the regional jail in Prince George County.

Local banks take 'all-hands-on-deck' approach to loan volume

As small businesses nationwide are applying for financial assistance during the coronavirus pandemic, local banks are working to stay abreast of guidelines and process applications quickly. Open season for loan applications through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act — dubbed the CARES Act — along with the Paycheck Protection Program, was declared Friday. Business owners have flocked to their lending agents to find relief.

[Virginia Breeze bus to suspend service between Blacksburg and Washington](#)

The Virginia Breeze announced plans to suspend bus service Friday between Blacksburg and Union Station in Washington because not enough riders are traveling during the virus emergency.

[Shenandoah National Park is now closed at the request of the state Department of Health](#)

Shenandoah National Park was closed Wednesday and going forward by the National Park Service following a request from the Rappahannock Rapidan Health District of the Virginia Department of Health.

[Deliberately coughing on someone now a crime in Virginia Beach](#)

No one wants to be coughed on deliberately. But as the coronavirus pandemic swept around the globe the past several weeks, people started viewing such actions as potentially deadly. And in Virginia Beach and other locales, they are now considering it to be criminal, too.

[Alexandria faces \\$100M budget gap because of coronavirus pandemic](#)

The City of Alexandria is feeling a budget crunch from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, leaving officials in the Virginia city with no choice but to revise down their funding plan for the next fiscal year. Alexandria City Manager Mark Jinks announced revisions to his proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget in response to a \$100 million gap amid the fallout to the coronavirus crisis.

[COVID-19 Pandemic Drives Major Fairfax County Budget Changes](#)

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill is pitching major revisions to his budget proposal for fiscal year 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised budget eliminates a proposed three-cent tax rate increase and fee increases across-the-board in order to relieve pressure on the county's taxpayers. Hill's proposal also shifts spending to essential services only and removes all salary increases.

[Loudoun County supervisors approve \\$3B annual budget, plan to freeze \\$100M due to coronavirus uncertainty](#)

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday adopted a fiscal 2021 budget that reduces the tax rate one cent. The effect of the new budget on county homeowners remains uncertain given COVID-19's impact on the local economy. The county plans to freeze \$100 million as a result of COVID-19.

[Richmond City Council To Vote On Virtual Meetings During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

On Thursday afternoon, Richmond City Council will vote on new rules that would allow it to hold virtual rather than in-person meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. City council has had to cancel many of its meetings over the last few weeks, following Gov. Ralph Northam's executive order limiting public gatherings to 10 people or less. Richmond City Council's new rules would require three days of public notice before a meeting and that it be live streamed online through its Legistar service.

Trash collection in Williamsburg is being done differently to protect employees from the coronavirus

The city of Williamsburg's Public Works Department has changed how garbage is collected to protect its employees. Garbage truck drivers have started not manually picking up items outside of a resident's cart. City spokeswoman LeeAnn Hartmann said typically, residents will place bags of debris and trash next to their garbage carts when they overflow and it causes truck drivers to have to get out of the vehicle and manually collect the extra bags.

Gloucester seeks help to boost broadband access as coronavirus demand for online service climbs

With Virginia students doing schoolwork at home, and hordes of adults trying to work from home, Gloucester County is putting out a call to businesses to open access to their wi-fi connections to county residents. The county itself is offering free, if limited, wi-fi access in the parking lots of the main library and its Point branch in Hayes.

Spotsylvania school officials work to expand internet access

Spotsylvania County Public Schools has made internet hotspots available for students who cannot access the internet at home. The division is also making computers available to students who do not have them.

April 8

Farm stands across Hampton Roads open early to sell fruits and veggies

John Cromwell's farm stand in Virginia Beach usually opens in mid-May, when his fields are bursting with pea pods. Until then, he's busy supplying local restaurants with his hardy winter crops — beets, kale and collards. But with eateries across the country cutting back or closing entirely as a result of the coronavirus, Cromwell found himself last month with plenty of ripe vegetables and no where to sell them.

Arlington Democrats go mail-in route for School Board caucus

The Arlington County Democratic Committee is switching to a mail-in election to select two endorsees for School Board, with results expected to be released in early June. The new process, devised in the wake of the COVID-19 public-health crisis, replaces the traditional Democratic caucus, which usually includes two or three days of in-person voting.

[Virginia Beach City Council votes to suspend meal taxes to reduce takeout bills](#)

Starting in May, anyone ordering takeout from a Virginia Beach restaurant will see a 5.5% decrease on the bill. During its second virtual meeting since the coronavirus pandemic began, the Virginia Beach City Council voted 9-2 on Tuesday evening to suspend the meals tax for May and June in an effort to encourage more people to support local businesses.

[Peninsula localities adjust as they face unknowns with budget season approaching](#)

For Peninsula localities and their budget cycles, the coronavirus pandemic has created a new level of unknown. City councils, county boards of supervisors and school boards must complete their spending plans in time for the July 1 start of their next fiscal year. Whether the virus and the hefty economic cost it imposes on some communities will be over by then is far from certain.

[Chesapeake sheriff wants to use temporary building to house inmates in Hampton Roads](#)

A temporary building at the Chesapeake city jail could be used to house inmates in the region who test positive for coronavirus. Chesapeake Sheriff Jim O'Sullivan has asked the state Board of Corrections for permission to use the building, which is vacant, to isolate sick inmates from the general population.

[Roanoke to furlough some city workers](#)

Roanoke City Manager Bob Cowell says that he and his staff are working on next year's budget while picking up the pieces of this year's. The Great Recession found Roanoke City Manager Bob Cowell halfway across the country. Cowell was director of planning and development services in College Station, Texas, and he was part of a team that had to implement furloughs during the 2008-2009 period.

April 7

[Frederick County EDA takes steps to help businesses hit by virus](#)

As the COVID-19 pandemic forces many businesses to temporarily close to prevent the spread of the virus, the Frederick County Economic Development Authority is ramping up efforts to help local businesses stay afloat. According to EDA Executive Director Patrick Barker, the EDA is trying to be a source of information about the coronavirus situation and its impact on the economy.

[Forest Service, towns announce temporary closure of Virginia Creeper Trail](#)

The Virginia Creeper Trail will be temporarily closed starting today at 5 p.m. in an effort to protect the public from COVID-19. The decision was made jointly by the US Forest Service and the towns of Abingdon and Damascus, according to a news release. "Recent overcrowding along portions of the trail, concern for increasing the burden on local Emergency Medical

Services and the health and safety of all trail users were the driving forces behind this decision,” Matthew Crum, president of the Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy stated in the release.

Arlington Democrats evaluating options for School Board caucus

The Arlington County Democratic Committee is formulating options to carry through with its School Board caucus in the wake of public-health concerns. . . . Democrats had planned two days of caucus voting at county schools in May, but it appears increasingly unlikely that will take place. Because the caucus is not a state-run political event, Democrats have a significant amount of leeway in setting up (and amending) procedures.

Hampton council to hold virtual public meeting

Hampton City Council will host a virtual public meeting Wednesday. The council’s public meetings scheduled for next week at city hall have been canceled due to coronavirus concerns. Instead, it will hold a meeting electronically at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. Some members of council are expected to attend electronically.

Stafford supervisors seek virtual public comment at budget hearing

Stafford County supervisors have decided not to let residents offer on-site comments at a public hearing Tuesday on the proposed fiscal 2021 budget because of concerns about the coronavirus. Instead, residents can submit comments by completing an online form, which will remain open until April 21. All submissions received will be read into the public record.

City Council to vote on virtual meetings, tax relief

Fredericksburg’s City Council will hold a special virtual meeting at 4 p.m. Tuesday to vote on several issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be broadcast on Cox Channel 84 and Verizon Channel 42. Public comments can be posted on Facebook Live during the meeting, but won’t be answered until the following day.

Roanoke City Council likely to give taxpayers extra time

Roanoke City Council is moving toward offering taxpayers short-term relief from coronavirus-driven economic hardships via deadline extensions and waiving late penalties. During Monday’s electronic council meeting, proposals to waive late fees for real estate taxes — due Monday — for 30 days and to extend the personal property by a month, to June 30, received broad support.

Danville Public Works implements new guidelines to protect workers

To reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus, Danville’s Public Works Department is implementing new measures for residents to follow to protect the city’s sanitation workers. Rick Drazenovich, the director of public works, said residents are generating up to 20% more household garbage since the state’s stay-at-home order was issued in March.

April 6

Park service closes section of Appalachian Trail including McAfee Knob

The National Park Service has closed 27 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus at the center of a worldwide outbreak that has sickened more than a million people and killed more than 65,000.

City of Alexandria could face nearly \$100 million budget shortfall

The City of Alexandria, Virginia, stands to lose nearly \$100 million through mid-2021 as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Under new budget proposals, the city is considering hiring freezes at the city government level and deferring city projects and employee compensation increases, it said.

Herndon Officials Rethink FY 2021 Budget Due to Economic Changes

As the U.S. experiences an economic downturn as a result of COVID19, Town of Herndon officials plan to revise the previously proposed budget for fiscal year 2021. Herndon Town Manager William Ashton II recently decided that the budget is no longer fitting for the town's needs, according to a press release.

Chesterfield County cuts \$50 million from upcoming budget, salary increases canceled

As localities continue to grapple with estimating the full economic blow of COVID-19, Chesterfield County released its revised budget Friday afternoon, and it's almost \$50 million short of County Administrator Joe Casey's initial \$773 million budget proposal and \$10 million below the 2020 adopted budget.

Virginia Beach has started offering hotel rooms to homeless people to fight the spread of the coronavirus

Over the past two weeks, Virginia Beach has quietly offered 46 hotel rooms to homeless individuals, in the hopes that getting them off the streets would help prevent the spread of coronavirus. To the city's surprise, Gov. Ralph Northam endorsed the idea on Friday — announcing \$2.5 million in emergency funding for localities across the state to provide temporary housing for about 1,500 people without shelter. Virginia Beach expects to receive more than \$124,000 from the state and possibly more from the federal government to help the homeless.

Possibly delaying the new high school by a year hints at the city's tough financial decisions to come

Harrisonburg leaders are looking at a starkly different financial reality now than they were less than four months ago when the city council approved the \$100 million needed to build and open a second high school, which has the Harrisonburg School Board considering a one-year delay

of its construction. The school board will hold a closed session Thursday to discuss with the board's attorney Kevin Rose the ramifications of altering the construction contract.

Roanoke Valley police, DMV make adjustments

The first day of April last week also brought with it the possibility of a missed deadline for some Virginia drivers — anyone whose vehicle's state inspection stickers expired at the end of March. Depending on the circumstances, however, windshields still bearing a 3/20 might not necessarily prompt a traffic stop.

Montgomery County closes government center after second worker gets initial positive COVID-19 test

Montgomery County is closing its government center for two weeks after two workers tested positive for COVID-19, the county announced Saturday, the same day the county vaulted from one to six total reported cases. Many core government functions, such as public safety and others that operate from separate facilities, will continue, county spokeswoman Jennifer Harris said Saturday.

Washington County, Va., elections office closes

The elections office is now closed in Washington County, Virginia, due to a recent announcement by the Mount Rogers Health District that community transmission of coronavirus is now occurring.

April 2

Richmond Economic Development Authority Creates Small Business Loan Program

March 25

Lynchburg mayor denounces move to reopen Liberty as 'reckless'

With the threat of the coronavirus looming, Lynchburg Mayor Treney Tweedy sharply criticized Liberty University President Jerry Falwell Jr.'s decision to invite students back to campus, calling the move reckless and unfortunate.

March 24

Arlington Grapples with Community Transmission of Coronavirus

Like other nearby localities, Arlington has entered the community transmission phase of coronavirus outbreak.

[Athletic Fields, Dog Parks, Playgrounds Closing in Arlington](#)

All Arlington dog parks, fields and playgrounds are closing in an effort to stop the spread of coronavirus.

[Dan River Region leaders react to executive order to close businesses](#)

Many of the area businesses that had managed to remain open during the past few weeks now will be forced to close for at least a month as a result of Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's executive order.

March 23

[Fairfax County COVID-19 Update](#)

Fairfax County is still proceeding with development reviews, inspections and permitting, albeit with adjusted procedures. For zoning cases, the Department of Planning and Development is primarily working remotely and has adjusted to receiving electronic resubmissions.

[Alexandria closes outdoor spaces due to coronavirus](#)

Playgrounds, recreation centers and other outdoor areas have been shut down by the City of Alexandria in order to slow the spread of coronavirus, the city announced Saturday afternoon. The closures, announced in conjunction with Alexandria City Public Schools, target basketball and tennis courts, fenced-in fields and dog parks.

[Arlington County Rethinks FY2021 Budget Due To Coronavirus](#)

Arlington County Board Chair Libby Garvey called the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Proposal County Manager Mark Schwartz submitted in February "no longer very relevant" in light of the current coronavirus crisis

March 19

[F.C. Declares Local Emergency in Response to Coronavirus](#)

Falls Church City Manager Wyatt Shields, in an exclusive interview with the News-Press Wednesday afternoon, confirmed that the City and City schools are in full-scale mobilization to adhere with "social distancing" and other key elements aimed at stemming the spread of the deadly airborne coronavirus.

[LewisGale implements stricter policies as coronavirus cases in Virginia reach 77](#)

LewisGale Regional Health System is implementing new procedures as cases of the novel coronavirus continue to increase throughout Virginia

Colonial Downs announces all Rosie's Gaming Emporiums will close temporarily amid coronavirus

Richmond-area police departments prepare to enforce 10-person limit, while keeping eye on crime during pandemic

The Richmond and Chesterfield County police departments are giving targeted businesses a grace period to comply with Gov. Ralph Northam's order limiting gatherings larger than 10 people.

Arlington Officials Scramble to Rethink Budget, Urge Additional Action from State

While reducing the human toll of the coronavirus outbreak is a top priority, Arlington officials are also trying to determine its impact on the upcoming county budget

Social distancing: Williamsburg City Council met via video, and the public participated

Hampton's top prosecutor criticizes judges for hearings held amid coronavirus concerns

A jury trial in a Hampton gun possession case this week likely marked the last such trial in Hampton for quite a while.

March 18

Loudoun County board opposes sending letter to governor requesting closure of gathering places

With budgets to review, local governments seek legal help to balance COVID-19 precautions, public participation

As virus forces shutdown, rural Northern Neck library works to fill essential role for community

Virus threat pushes jail head, prosecutors to release inmates at Middle River Regional Jail

Middle River Regional Jail in Verona has started releasing some non-violent offenders in an effort to reduce the jail population as the threat of the coronavirus continues to grow

Amazon to hire 1,400 Virginians to meet order surge, donate \$1M to Arlington nonprofits

The company will also add \$2/hour to employees' current hourly rates through end of April

Arlington County residents get tested at drive-thru coronavirus testing site

As COVID-19 cases spike in Virginia and the D.C. area, Arlington County is stepping up its efforts to test those who are showing symptoms of the novel coronavirus

Central Virginia's First Drive-Through Coronavirus Tests Begin

More than 100 people were tested for the coronavirus disease at the first drive-through testing site in Central Virginia on Wednesday

Goodyear shutting down operations until at least April 3

Citing a sudden decline in market demand with the spread of the coronavirus, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. is shutting down manufacturing until at least April 3, according to a company statement. Goodyear is Danville's largest employer with about 2,000 workers