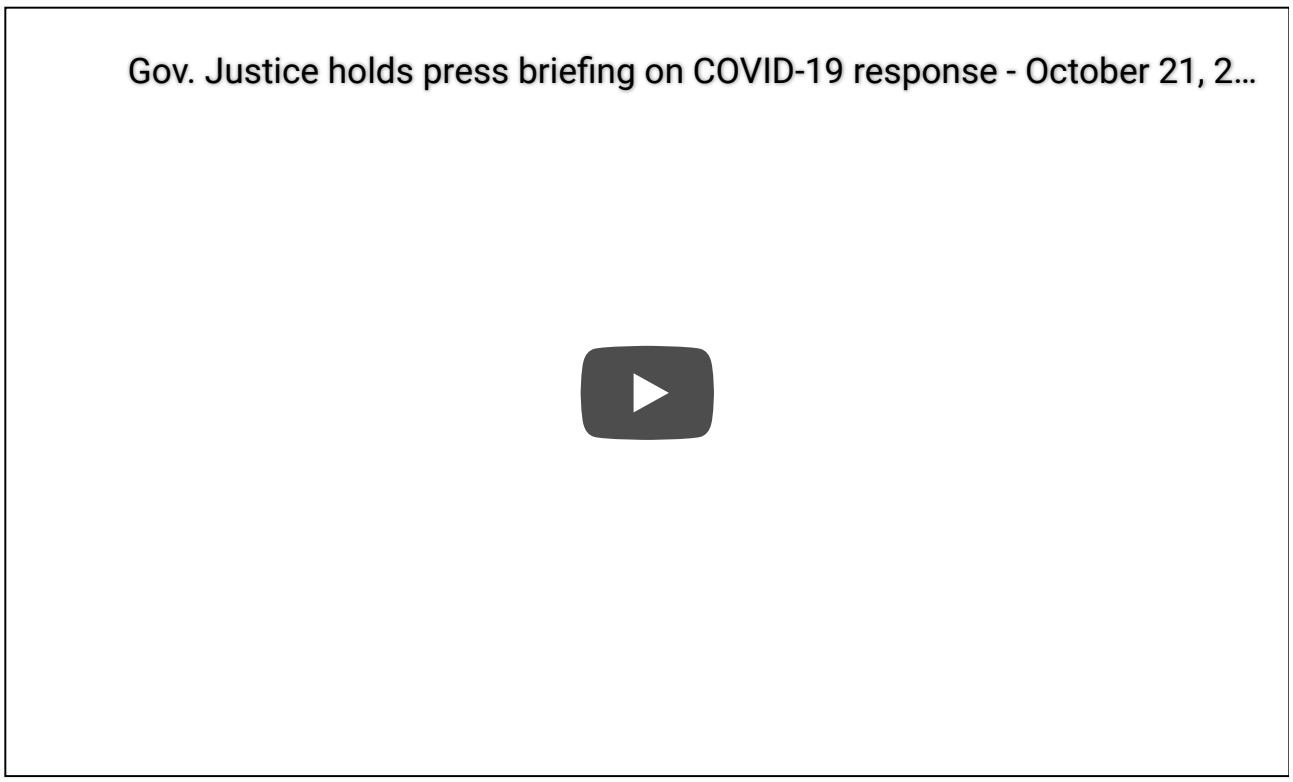
COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice providing $25 million to help qualifying West Virginians pay utility bills

10/21/2020



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

$25 MILLION IN CARES ACT DOLLARS BEING PROVIDED TO HELP QUALIFYING WEST VIRGINIANS PAY UTILITY BILLS

During Wednesday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that the $25 million of CARES Act relief funds allocated to assist qualifying West Virginians pay their utility bills are now ready to be distributed.

The money will go to local Public Service Districts so they can pass it along to customers.

Customers of electric, natural gas, water, and sewer utility companies who have experienced economic hardship and/or uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, causing them to have unpaid utility bills from the period of March 1 – July 31 of this year, may receive financial assistance to pay those bills.

"Take advantage of this, West Virginia. We've got $25 million coming your way," Gov. Justice said. "I truly hope and believe that this money will assist West Virginians that are still struggling with this pandemic."

West Virginia residential customers who qualify for these funds will be receiving letters with an application from their utility companies in the next few days.

Customers must complete and return the application by Thursday, November 12, 2020.

Click here to view photo album
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157716558293931)

The Governor was joined for the announcement by Charlotte Lane, chairman of the Public Service Commission of West Virginia.

"We thank you, Governor, for making this money available to everyone to help them with their utility bills," Lane said. "Governor Justice recognizes that there are thousands of West Virginians who are finding themselves having to choose between paying their utility bills, buying food or medicine, or paying for other essentials.

"This $25 million of CARES Act money that has been allocated by the Governor will help qualified West Virginians and it will make a difference in their lives," Lane continued.

Lane added that over 133,000 residential utility customers across the state who have unpaid utility bills within the specified time frame qualify to receive this financial assistance.

"We recognize that this generous grant program will not alleviate everyone's delinquency," Lane said. "But the Public Service Commission has specially trained consumer affairs technicians who are available to assist customers in negotiating payment arrangements with the utility companies.

"The utilities themselves are continuing to work with customers who are behind in their bills and are offering payment plans. We really appreciate that utility companies are working with people and have not terminated customers during this very difficult time," Lane continued. "My fellow commissioners and I would like to thank Governor Justice for making this money available for people who need help.

"Our goal together is for people to continue to receive service and for our utility companies to remain strong so they can continue to provide service to all West Virginians."

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that the number of active COVID-19 cases across the state is now 5,106, up from 5,095 Monday. The cumulative percent of positive cases increased slightly to 2.84 percent, up from 2.83 percent Monday.

Meanwhile, West Virginia's **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/) – also known as Rt – increased to 1.04 Wednesday. However, that mark was still good enough to be tied for the 13th-best such rate of any state in the country.

West Virginia continues to outperform the national average – as well as the rates of all of its bordering states – in percentage of population positive, and percentage of positive test results.

Click here to view the latest COVID-19 data (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

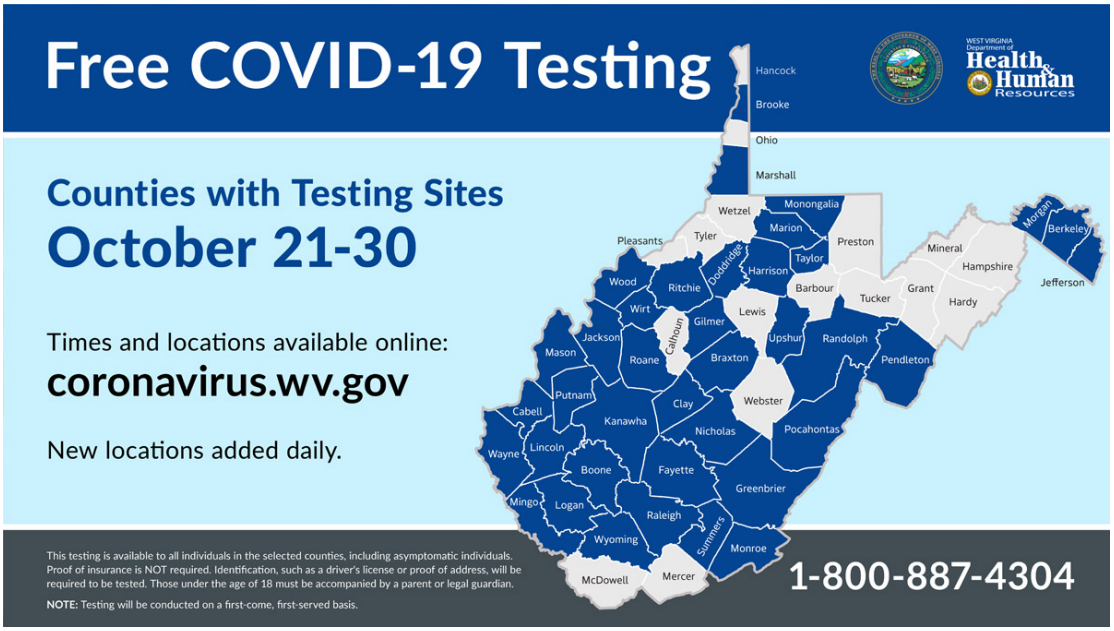
AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice offered a reminder that free testing events are now scheduled over the coming weeks in 38 counties across West Virginia.

As part of the Governor's Aggressive Testing initiative, each county reaching Red or Orange status in the **DHHR's County Alert System map** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) **(Click "County Alert System" tab)** is required to set up at least one free testing site within the same day. Each county reaching Gold status is required to set up at least one free testing site within 48 hours. As of Wednesday, the only Red county was Wyoming County. Orange counties included Doddridge, Mingo, Monroe, Pendleton, Wayne, and Wirt counties. Gold counties included Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Clay, Jackson, Jefferson, Ritchie, Upshur, and Webster counties.

This testing is available to all residents in selected counties, including asymptomatic individuals. Proof of insurance is not required. Attendees should bring identification, such as a driver's license or proof of address, to help in returning test results. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Click here to view all locations, dates, times and more details (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

Gov. Justice also offered a reminder that, as part of his administration's efforts to expand free COVID-19 testing throughout West Virginia, the State is now partnering with Walgreens and West Virginia-based company Fruth Pharmacy to offer dozens of new free testing sites at several of their pharmacy drive-thrus.

Walgreens is offering free testing at 29 locations statewide, including stores in Boone, Cabell, Fayette, Jackson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Monongalia, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Putnam, Raleigh, Summers, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

Fruth Pharmacy is offering free testing at 12 of their locations statewide, including stores in Cabell, Jackson, Kanawha, Mason, Putnam, Roane, and Wood counties.

Click here to find the testing location closest to you
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

WEDNESDAY MAP UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided a look at West Virginia's latest mid-week County Alert System map update, which continues to show significant improvement with Aggressive Testing efforts underway in several regions.

Red counties: 1 (Wyoming)
Orange counties: 6 (Doddridge, Mingo, Monroe, Pendleton, Wayne, Wirt)
Gold counties: 9 (Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Clay, Jackson, Jefferson, Ritchie, Upshur, Webster)
Yellow counties: 8 (Brooke, Cabell, Gilmer, Kanawha, Lewis, Morgan, Roane, Wood)
Green counties: 31 (All others)

The map is updated live on the **DHHR's COVID-19 Dashboard** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) **(Click "County Alert System" tab)** throughout the week for informational purposes and to provide an indication of how each county is trending ahead of each Saturday at 5 p.m.; the time when each county is assigned its official color designation for the next week, which determines the level of scholastic, athletic, and extracurricular activities permitted in each county for that particular week.

West Virginia COVID-19

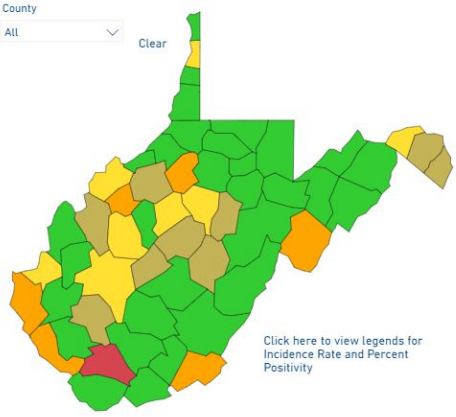
Overview | **County Alert System** | 7-Day Trend | Cumulative Summary | Case and Lab Trends | Other Trends | Hospital | Long-Term Care | State Comparison

Note: There are two ways to assign a color code to the county map: an infection rate or percent positivity. The lower of the two metrics is used to designate the color for the county. The Lower of the Two Indicators row shows the metric that is used to designate the color on the county map. Each indicator is calculated for 7 or 14 days (*dependent upon population).
Cases residing in nursing homes, state or federal prisons and university/college isolation dorms are excluded.

Map colors as of: 10/20/20

County: All

Clear



Click here to view legends for Incidence Rate and Percent Positivity

Please Note: The West Virginia Department of Education School Alert System Map is located here: West Virginia Department of Education

Click here for nursing home information from Office of Health Facility Licensure and Certification

Click here to view Percent Positivity breakdown | **Click here to view Infection Rate breakdown**

County	10/14/20	10/15/20	10/16/20	10/17/20	10/18/20	10/19/20	10/20/20
Barbour							
Lower of Two Indicators	4.37	3.70	3.04	2.68	1.77	1.87	1.61
Infection Rate	28.67	24.33	18.25	16.51	12.16	11.30	6.95
Percent Positivity	4.37	3.70	3.04	2.68	1.77	1.87	1.61
Berkeley							
Lower of Two Indicators	6.41	5.97	5.95	5.99	6.22	5.87	4.97
Infection Rate	18.10	18.94	20.50	20.74	21.46	21.34	19.66
Percent Positivity	6.41	5.97	5.95	5.99	6.22	5.87	4.97
Boone							
Lower of Two Indicators	2.65	3.30	3.62	3.70	4.31	4.85	4.65
Infection Rate	10.65	11.98	12.65	14.65	17.98	19.97	20.64
Percent Positivity	2.65	3.30	3.62	3.70	4.31	4.85	4.65
Braxton*							
Lower of Two Indicators	3.08	3.70	4.23	4.50	4.94	4.85	4.27
Infection Rate	8.19	9.21	12.79	13.31	14.84	14.84	16.38
Percent Positivity	3.08	3.70	4.23	4.50	4.94	4.85	4.27
Brooke							
Lower of Two Indicators	3.38	2.86	4.04	4.37	4.12	3.94	3.28
Infection Rate	7.81	10.42	12.37	13.67	14.33	14.98	13.67
Percent Positivity	3.38	2.86	4.04	4.37	4.12	3.94	3.28
Cabell							
Lower of Two Indicators	2.72	2.08	2.65	3.32	3.11	3.14	3.21
Infection Rate	18.96	19.58	18.96	25.33	24.55	24.24	25.48
Percent Positivity	2.72	2.08	2.65	3.32	3.11	3.14	3.21
Calhoun*							
Lower of Two Indicators	2.46	1.72	1.85	1.83	2.15	1.81	1.79
Infection Rate	7.03	5.02	5.02	5.02	6.03	5.02	5.02
Percent Positivity	2.46	1.72	1.85	1.83	2.15	1.81	1.79
Clay*							

* Indicates counties with a population under 16,000 is on a 14-day average.

All other counties have a population greater than 16,000 is on a 7-day average.

Note: All data are provisional and subject to change based on information obtained during public health investigations.

Updated 10:00 AM 10/21/2020

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

OUTBREAK REPORT

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that, per the West Virginia Department of Education, there are 20 active outbreaks in public schools across the state. These outbreaks account for 68 confirmed cases.

Click here to view the WVDE's Current Outbreaks in Schools chart
(https://wvde.us/schooloutbreaks)

West Virginia now has 14 active church-related outbreaks across 12 counties: Doddridge, Fayette, Mason, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Putnam, Upshur, Wayne, Wetzel, Wood, and Wyoming counties.

Other recent church-related outbreaks in Berkeley, Harrison, and Logan counties are no longer considered active at this time.

The Governor reported there remain 43 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state.

Meanwhile, the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) is now reporting 12 active cases of COVID-19 among inmates across the state. Of those cases, nine are located within Martinsburg Correctional Center in Berkeley County. An additional 84 inmates at Martinsburg Correctional Center have been tested, with all testing negative.

There now remain just 10 active cases among DCR employees across West Virginia.

Click here to view the latest corrections facility update
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx)

FLU VACCINE REMINDER

Once again today, Gov. Justice took time out of his remarks on COVID-19 to remind and encourage all West Virginians to get their flu vaccine.

According to health officials, everyone 6 months and older should receive this vaccine.

Locate a flu vaccine near you on the **DHHR website**
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx).

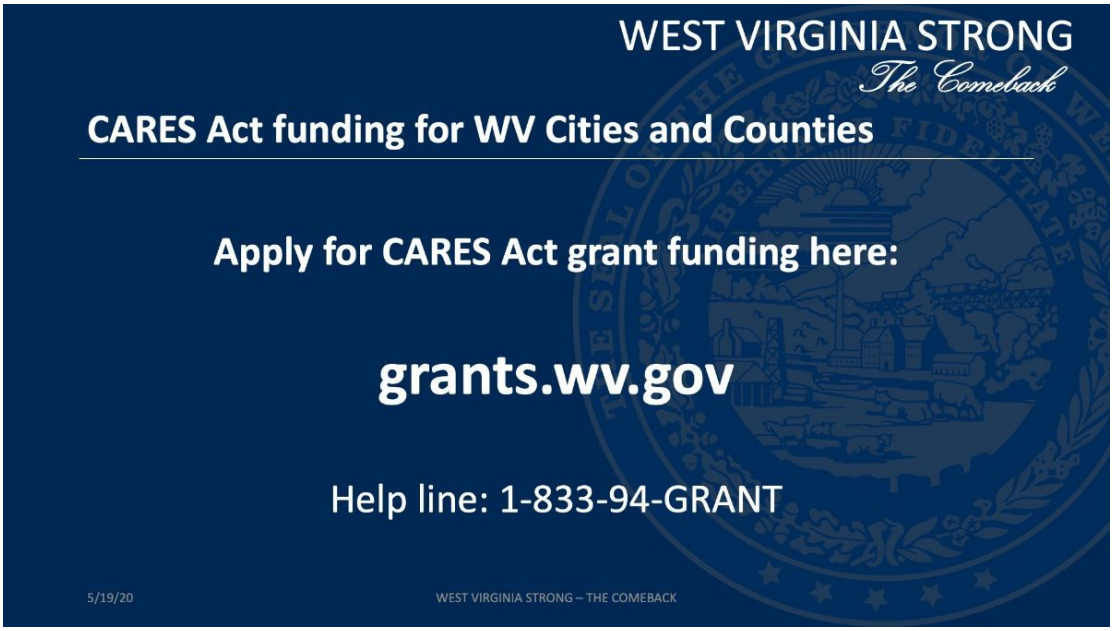
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx)

CITIES/COUNTIES GRANT FUNDING: OVER $155 MILLION HAS NOW BEEN AWARDED

Also today, Gov. Justice provided an update on cities and counties throughout West Virginia applying for funds through the federal CARES Act, reporting that more than $155 million has now been awarded all across the state.

A **web portal** (https://grants.wv.gov/en) is available for city and county government officials to apply. Interested parties can also call the helpline: **1-833-94-GRANT**.

Each of the recipients of CARES Act funding, along with grant amounts, are now available to view through the West Virginia State Auditor's Office **COVID-19 transparency website** (https://stories.opengov.com/westvirginia/published/mnOzKr2wB).



(https://grants.wv.gov/en)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Click here to view all Executive Orders and other actions (https://governor.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d525ab9ade4d860d2b5772468&id=3029d4fcc4&e=5c140b96bc) taken by Gov. Justice to combat the spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia.

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

Contact Information

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