COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice honors heroes on the front lines of the state's pandemic response

10/30/2020

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.

GOV. JUSTICE PRESENTS FREEDOM AWARDS HONORING EMERGENCY MANAGERS

During Friday's briefing, Gov. Justice joined officials with the West Virginia Department of Homeland Security to honor six West Virginia county emergency managers, presenting them with the DHS' Freedom Award for their commitment to answering the call to duty.

"I congratulate every single one of our Freedom Award recipients beyond belief," Gov. Justice said. "You've stepped up in the middle of a pandemic. What you've done is so meaningful to every single West Virginian.

"When it boils right down to it, you are all truly heroes," Gov. Justice continued.

DHS has inaugurated awards for fiscal year 2020 to recognize emergency officials in six categories: Lifesaving, Innovation, Teamwork, Perseverance, Leadership, and Lifetime Achievement.

DHS Secretary Jeff Sandy presented the 2020 DHS Freedom Awards to the following recipients:

- Roger Bryant, Director, Logan County Office of Emergency Management
- Lou Vargo, Director, Wheeling-Ohio County Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
- Tom Hart, Director, Marshall County Office of Emergency Management
- Laura Pysz, Director, Harrison County Office of Emergency Management
- Dean Meadows, Director, Wyoming County 911 Center and Office of Emergency Services
- Walter Smittle III, Director, Jackson County Office of Emergency Management

All 55 county managers throughout the state will also receive recognition for their teamwork during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"Thank you for the brave work you've done in taking care of our people," Gov. Justice said. "God bless you and thank you for all that you've done."

Click here to read more (https://dhs.wv.gov/News-Announcements/Pages/WV-emergency-leaders-honored-with-DHS-Freedom-Awards.aspx)

RETIRING WEST VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD LEADER HONORED WITH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice joined Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, Adjutant General of the West Virginia National Guard, in honoring WVNG Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip R. Cantrell with the West Virginia Distinguished Service Medal.

Cantrell is retiring following a 32-year career in the United States Army.

"Command Sergeant Major Cantrell has spent more than three decades and traveled all around the world to defend the freedoms that we hold dear as West Virginians and as Americans. We all owe him a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid," West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice said. "We owe everything we have to the men and women of our West Virginia National Guard and all of our members of the military, active and retired, who have served and sacrificed to make our lives better. I congratulate Command Sergeant Major Cantrell, from the bottom of my heart, on a career well-spent serving his fellow West Virginians, and I wish him nothing but the best in his much-deserved retirement."

Cantrell has served as the Senior Enlisted Leader of the WVNG since Nov. 1, 2018, where he has provided counsel to the Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, on all issues pertaining to the enlisted force of Soldiers and Airmen in the West Virginia Guard. Prior to his current assignment, Cantrell served as the state command sergeant major for the West Virginia Army National Guard.

"On behalf of all the men and women of the West Virginia National Guard, we thank Command Sergeant Major Cantrell for his great service," Maj. Gen. Hoyer said. "He has done so many great things. He was the catalyst that helped get the new Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy up and running in Montgomery. He's been an exceptional advocate for our Gold Star families."

Click here to read more (https://www.wv.ng.mil/News/Article/2400325/gov-justice-wva-guard-celebrate-cantrell-retirement-after-32-years-of-service-i/)

coronavirus.wv.gov

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

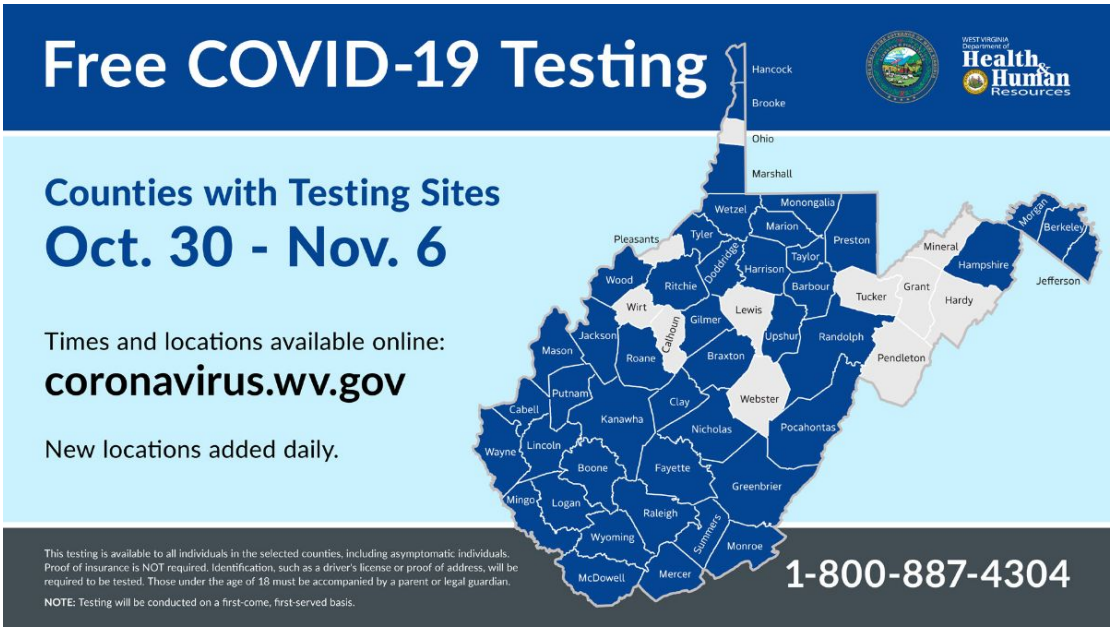
Additionally Friday, Gov. Justice offered a reminder that free testing events are now scheduled over the coming weeks in 44 counties across West Virginia.

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 Friday, the only Red county was Mingo County. Orange counties included Berkeley, Morgan, Upshur, Wayne, and Wyoming counties. Gold counties included Barbour, Boone, Braxton, Clay, Hampshire, Jackson, Jefferson, Logan, Marshall, Monroe, Putnam, and Tyler counties.

The Governor also specifically pointed out that new testing locations have been established in the Eastern Panhandle for testing events through the weekend. These events will take place in Berkeley County at Musselman High School, in Jefferson County at the Ranson Civic Center, and in Morgan County at Warm Springs Middle School.

This testing is available to all residents, 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 now offering free testing at 54 locations statewide, including several new testing sites. Locations include stores in Berkeley, Boone, Brooke, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Gilmer, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Upshur, Wayne, Wetzel, Wood, and Wyoming counties.

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

Pre-registration is requried for pharmacy drive-thru testing.

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)

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Gov. Justice reported Friday that the daily percent positivity rate is 3.77%, down from 4.29% on Wednesday. However, the cumulative percent of positive cases is 2.91%, up from 2.88% on Wednesday.

The Governor also added that the **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/) – also known as Rt – had increased to 1.08 as of Friday afternoon; tied for the 12th-best such rate of any state in the country.

Meanwhile, 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.

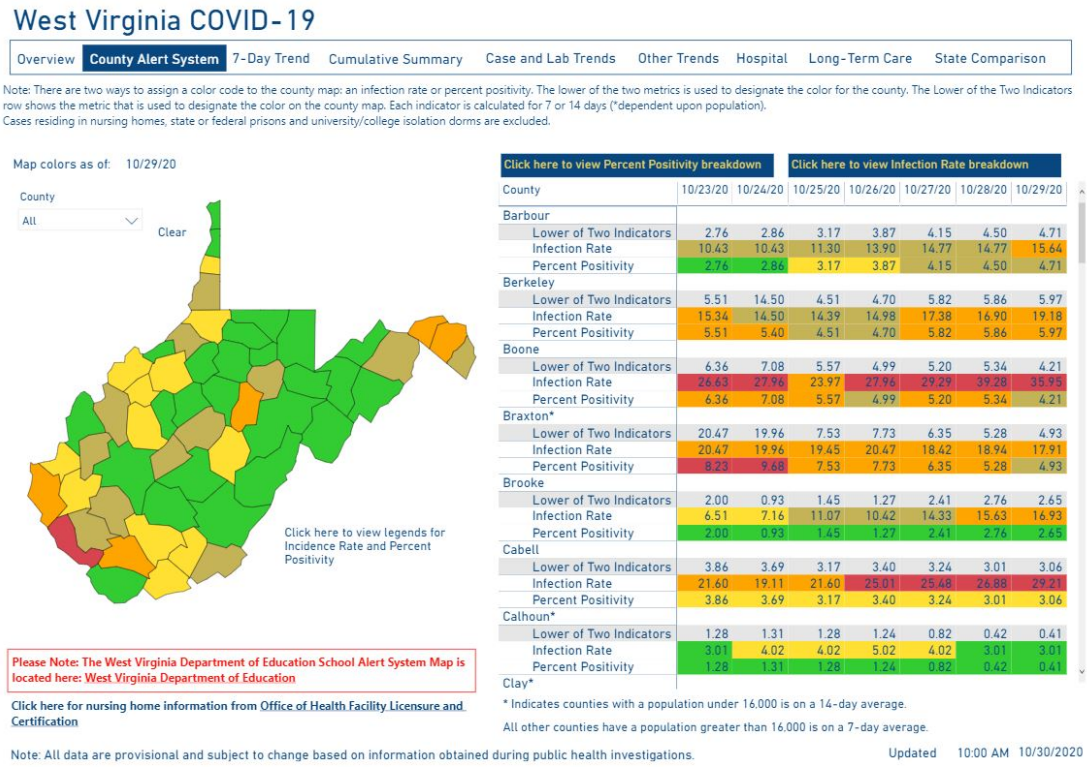
Click here to view the latest COVID-19 data (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

FRIDAY MAP UPDATE

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice provided a look at West Virginia's latest mid-week County Alert System map update.

Red counties: 1 (Mingo)
Orange counties: 5 (Berkeley, Morgan, Upshur, Wayne, Wyoming)
Gold counties: 12 (Barbour, Boone, Braxton, Clay, Hampshire, Jackson, Jefferson, Logan, Marshall, Monroe, Putnam, Tyler)
Yellow counties: 12 (Cabell, Lincoln, Mercer, Ohio, Raleigh, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood)
Green counties: 25 (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.



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

DHHR's COVID-19 Dashboard **(Click "County Alert System" tab)**
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

OUTBREAK REPORT

On Friday, 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 82 confirmed cases.

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

West Virginia now has 16 active church-related outbreaks across 13 counties: Cabell, Doddridge, Kanawha, Mercer, Mingo, Monroe, Nicholas, Putnam, Raleigh, Ritchie, Wayne, Wetzel, and Wyoming counties

The Governor reported there are now 48 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state.

Finally, the Governor announced that Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) is reporting no active cases of COVID-19 at this time among the state's inmate population. However, there remain nine active cases among DCR employees.

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

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

Once again Friday, Gov. Justice provided a reminder that $25 million of CARES Act relief funds allocated to assist qualifying West Virginians pay their utility bills is being distributed across the state.

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.

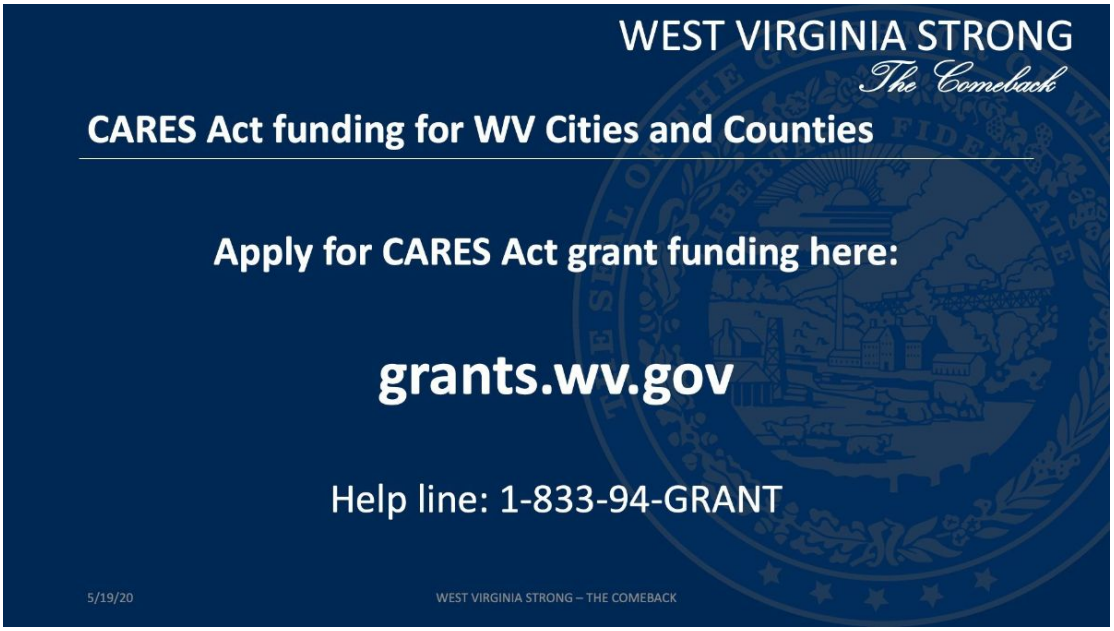
Qualifying customers will receive a letter and application in the mail. Customers must complete and return the application by Thursday, November 12, 2020.

CITIES/COUNTIES GRANT FUNDING: OVER $168 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 $168 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)

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 through the **DHHR website** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx).

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

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).

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