GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

April 17, 2020

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
11:50AM O'CLOCK

APR 17 2020

Secretary of State

The Honorable Ruth R. Hughs
Secretary of State
State Capitol Room 1E.8
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Secretary Hughs:

Pursuant to his powers as Governor of the State of Texas, Greg Abbott has issued the following:

> Executive Order No. GA-17 relating to the establishment of the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas.

The original executive order is attached to this letter of transmittal.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Davidson
Executive Clerk to the Governor

GSD/gsd

Attachment

Executive Order

BY THE
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

Executive Department
Austin, Texas
April 17, 2020

EXECUTIVE ORDER
GA 17

Relating to the establishment of the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas.

WHEREAS, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, issued a disaster proclamation on March 13, 2020, certifying under Section 418.014 of the Texas Government Code that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) poses an imminent threat of disaster for all counties in the State of Texas; and

WHEREAS, on April 12, 2020, I issued a proclamation renewing the disaster declaration for all counties in Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Dr. John Hellerstedt, has determined that COVID-19 represents a public health disaster within the meaning of Chapter 81 of the Texas Health and Safety Code; and

WHEREAS, I have issued numerous executive orders and suspensions of Texas laws in response to COVID-19, aimed at protecting the health and safety of Texans and ensuring an effective response to this disaster; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order GA-14, issued on March 31, 2020, mandated certain social-distancing restrictions and other obligations for Texans that are aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 according to federal guidelines; and

WHEREAS, although many lives have been saved because of social-distancing restrictions like those required by Executive Order GA-14, more than 400 Texans have lost their lives because of COVID-19, and the disease still presents a serious threat across Texas that could persist in certain areas; and

WHEREAS, apart from the threats to health and safety, COVID-19 has also wrought havoc on the many Texas businesses and workers affected by social-distancing restrictions that were necessary to protect human life; and

WHEREAS, over one million unemployment claims have been filed during the COVID-19 disaster by conscientious Texans who want to get back to work as soon as it is safe to do so; and

WHEREAS, Texas must protect lives while restoring livelihoods, both of which can be achieved with the expert advice of medical professionals and business leaders; and

WHEREAS, today I have issued Executive Order GA-16 to replace Executive Order GA-14, and while it generally continues to mandate the same social-distancing restrictions

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and other obligations for Texans according to federal guidelines, Executive Order GA-16 offers a safe, strategic first step to Open Texas by permitting, starting on Friday, April 24, 2020, retail pick-up and delivery services under the strict conditions required by DSHS, and it also makes clear that teachers and staff can return to schools to conduct remote video instruction and perform administrative duties under certain restrictions; and

WHEREAS, the "governor is responsible for meeting … the dangers to the state and people presented by disasters" under Section 418.011 of the Texas Government Code, and the legislature has given the governor broad authority to fulfill that responsibility; and

WHEREAS, under Section 418.012, the "governor may issue executive orders … hav[ing] the force and effect of law;" and

WHEREAS, under Section 418.017(a), the "governor may use all available resources of state government and of political subdivisions that are reasonably necessary to cope with a disaster."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas, do hereby order the following:

Creation and Duties. The Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas, hereafter referred to as the Strike Force, is hereby created to advise the governor on safely and strategically restarting and revitalizing all aspects of the Lone Star State—work, school, entertainment, and culture. The Strike Force will represent a collaboration among medical professionals and public and private leaders, and shall have as its principal charges the following advisory duties, as well as any other advisory tasks assigned by the governor:

1. Study and make recommendations, in consultation with state health officials, for revitalizing the Texas economy during our recovery from the COVID-19 disaster, including without limitation on the following topics:

    a. Safely reopening Texas businesses across a variety of sectors in a strategic, healthy, and productive manner that protects workers and consumers, especially our most vulnerable populations, while also spurring economic recovery and growth;
    b. Providing the necessary training and resources, based on White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention best practices, to position Texas workers and businesses to recover from and thrive after the COVID-19 disaster;
    c. Re-stabilizing individuals and families who have been economically affected by the COVID-19 disaster;
    d. Safely and responsibly revitalizing key Texas institutions, including without limitation those focused on workforce and economic development, education, health care, energy, infrastructure, and arts, culture, and entertainment;
    e. Maximizing the use of federal funding and other available resources to recharge the Texas economy;
    f. Restoring health care services for Texans as soon as reasonably practicable for each type of service in light of the health and safety concerns and in consultation with each applicable state regulatory agency;

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g. Spurring the recovery and growth of small businesses in Texas;
h. Advancing economic growth in rural communities in Texas;
i. Ensuring fiscal responsibility and accountability in the coming phases of economic revitalization, including the expeditious and efficient deployment of resources provided by the federal government through stimulus programs; and
j. Keeping Texas the top destination for businesses looking to move or reopen.

2. Study and make recommendations, in consultation with state health officials, to safely ease restrictions on Texas businesses in the aftermath of the spread of COVID-19, including without limitation the restrictions imposed by my executive orders and those imposed by local officials; and

3. In coordination with the Office of the Governor, collaborate with key partners, including state leaders, state regulatory agencies, local governments and entities, and private-sector professionals, in studying and making recommendations of strategies and best practices for economic revitalization.

Immediate Deadlines. With Executive Order GA-16 set to expire on April 30, 2020, and given my expectation that it will not be extended in its current form, the Strike Force must provide immediate and ongoing recommendations consistent with the advisory duties outlined above, including advice regarding the safe reopening of Texas businesses in a strategic, healthy, and productive manner. This shall include recommendations about any prudent reopening measures that can be implemented between now and May 1, 2020. This advice should include the types of businesses and services to reopen, the extent to which the providers of those services may function, and any restrictions that should be placed upon those services and service providers.

Chief Operating Officer. The governor will designate a chief operating officer of the Strike Force, who will be employed by the Office of the Governor and perform all Strike Force duties as a state employee. The chief operating officer will coordinate Strike Force duties consistent with the provisions of this executive order, and act solely in an advisory capacity as it relates to Strike Force duties.

Chief Medical Advisors Working Group. The Strike Force shall include a working group consisting of chief medical advisors to advise the chief operating officer and other parts of the Strike Force concerning the health and medical evidence relevant to the Strike Force's duties. The chief medical advisors will be invited to serve by the governor. The working group and its members will assist in fulfilling the Strike Force duties, and act solely in an advisory capacity.

Working Groups. The chief operating officer may create such additional working groups, consisting of state, local, and other officials providing their advice and assistance, as the chief operating officer deems appropriate. The additional working groups should address at least the following topics: Workforce, Economic Development, and International Trade; Education; Fiscal Accountability; Energy; Arts, Culture, and Entertainment; Health Care Systems; Infrastructure; and Emergency Management and Supply Chain. These working group members will be invited to serve by the chief operating officer, and each working group will be led by one or more leaders. These working groups and their members will assist in fulfilling the Strike Force duties, and act solely in an advisory capacity.

State Officials. The Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House of

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Representatives, the Attorney General, and the Comptroller have agreed to serve as consulting members of the Strike Force. The governor will consult with the elected state officials as necessary and appropriate concerning advice and recommendations. The elected state officials will act solely in an advisory capacity as it relates to all Strike Force duties.

Meetings. The Strike Force may meet, by telephone or videoconference, at the call of the governor or the chief operating officer. No quorum requirements or meeting formalities shall be required for this advisory body or any of its subparts.

Vacancies and Additions. The governor may invite people to fill any vacancies that occur, may invite additional members, and may create and fill additional Strike Force positions as needed.

Administrative Support. The Office of the Governor shall provide administrative support for the Strike Force. All state agencies are hereby directed to cooperate with and assist the Strike Force in the performance of its duties.

Other Provisions. Any state or local government employees serving on the Strike Force do so in addition to the regular duties of their respective positions. Members of the Strike Force, other than the chief operating officer and any other employees within the Office of the Governor assigned to support the chief operating officer or the Strike Force, shall serve without salary or compensatory per diem. All Strike Force members who are providing their advice and assistance on a volunteer basis are doing so at the request and invitation of the governor and the Office of the Governor. All Strike Force members shall act solely in an advisory capacity. The criminal penalty provisions set forth in any emergency management plan under Section 418.173 of the Texas Government Code do not apply to this executive order.

This executive order shall remain in effect and in full force until modified, amended, rescinded, or superseded by the governor.

Given under my hand this the 17th day of April, 2020.

GREG ABBOTT
Governor

ATTESTED BY:

RUTH R. HUGHS
Secretary of State

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