Gov. Beshear Announces New Actions to Fight COVID-19

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 27, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Monday announced several new measures to stem the rising number of cases of the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in the commonwealth.

“At a time when Kentucky is dealing with a surge in the coronavirus, knowing where other states have gone and knowing what it takes to stop it from happening here, let’s remember that we’re going to get through this, and we’re going to get through this together, but it’s going to require us to do what’s necessary,” the Governor said. “Wherever you live in Kentucky, the virus is spreading. Our state government and the federal administration have significant agreement on what we need to do right now to make sure we don’t turn into Florida, Texas, Arizona, so many other states going through what could be absolutely devastating for them.”

So, today Gov. Beshear announced the following steps:

- Bars will be closed for two weeks, effective tomorrow, Tuesday, July 28.
- Restaurants will be limited to 25% of pre-pandemic capacity indoors; outdoor accommodations remain limited only by the ability to provide proper social distancing.
- Public and private schools are being asked to avoid offering in-person instruction until the third week of August.

To view the order from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services covering the new restrictions, which goes into effect at midnight tonight, click here (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20200728_CHFS-Order.pdf).

The Governor and the Kentucky Department for Public Health will monitor case numbers over the next two weeks with the goal of reopening bars and restoring restaurant capacity after that time.

“Let me say, there are a lot of really responsible bar owners out there, and I hate requiring this for them. They are paying for the actions of others, and it’s not fair, but this virus isn’t fair either,” the Governor said. “On restaurants, again, they can do unlimited outdoor seating as long as they can sufficiently spread guests out under social distancing guidelines, and we are going to work with our cities and localities to do what we need to do administratively to allow that outside seating to expand. This is going to hurt a lot of restaurants. But the

White House modeling shows that this is absolutely necessary to control the spread at this time when we either become the next Florida, or we get it under control and save the lives of our people and protect our economy."

Gov. Beshear noted that all of today's actions were conceived through and backed by guidance from the White House. He said we are currently at a point seen in Florida and Arizona before both of those states saw their cases grow to a point that has threatened their health care infrastructure, which puts even more lives in danger.

Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, highlighted the fact that our fate is in all of our hands when it comes to fighting the coronavirus.

"This is not outside of our control. Our actions can have a positive impact. One point I want to emphasize is that it's not politics if you have President Trump and Governor Beshear making the same recommendations. It's not politics. This is science. If we work together through this, we can succeed," Dr. Stack said. "Back when we were *Healthy at Home*, we crushed the curve. … But when we started lifting restrictions, our mobility went right back to normal. So now, if you want to keep Kentucky open and keep your loved ones safe, wear a mask."

Gov. Beshear noted that he was joined Sunday in Frankfort by Dr. Deborah Birx, response coordinator for the White House's Coronavirus Task Force. Dr. Birx advised that the growth in Kentucky's COVID-19 cases and, especially, the commonwealth's rising test positivity rate is cause not just for concern, but for immediate action. Dr. Birx specifically recommended that the Kentucky's bars close and indoor dining capacity be limited.

"We are in an escalation of cases, where our positivity rate also continues to increase. This virus is now escalating and spreading so much statewide that statewide action is necessary. That's the opinion of the Trump administration, and that's the position of this state government. It's every expert on the federal level and at our state level," said Gov. Beshear.

Even before Dr. Birx's visit, Gov. Beshear and his administration officials were making targeted moves to stop the spread of the virus in Kentucky. Last Monday, Gov. Beshear's administration issued a new travel advisory (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/Traveladvisory0720.pdf) that recommends a 14-day self-quarantine for Kentuckians who travel to states and U.S. territories that are reporting a positive coronavirus testing rate equal to or greater than 15%. For an updated list of areas meeting that threshold, click here (https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19). In addition, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services issued a new order (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20200720_Order_Mass-Gatherings.pdf) pulling back the guidance on non-commercial gatherings to allow only for meet-ups of 10 or fewer people.

Gov. Beshear said his new recommendation for schools is the only path toward getting, eventually, back to in-person instruction.

"By waiting until the third week of August, we believe it gives us a chance to get this thing under better control, to get more people wearing that facial covering and to get us in a place where we can handle this in a much better way," said Gov. Beshear. "My concern is if schools start before this, we'll see cases in schools. And if we see a lot of early cases in schools, it will be harder to get all of our schools open for in-person classes in some way that works for those families."

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Case Information – Monday, July 27

As of 4 p.m. July 27, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 27,601 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 522 of which were newly reported Monday. Twenty-one of the newly reported cases were from children ages 5 and younger, including a 4-month-old from Jessamine County and a 9-month-old from Bullitt County.

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported nine new deaths Monday, raising the total to 709 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Monday include a 74-year-old woman from Bell County; four men, ages 70, 71, 82 and 98, and three women, ages 61, 76 and 84, from Jefferson County; and 61-year-old man from Livingston County.

“I don’t want to be a state where casket-makers are running out of their caskets, that they’re loaded into 18-wheelers to come to us. I don’t want to be a state that has to order one of these freezer trucks because their morgues run out of space. I don’t want to be a state that runs out of ICU beds and one of your loved ones doesn’t have space. I don’t want to be a state where a doctor has to look at 10 young people, knowing they have three ventilators, and possibly make a decision on who lives and who dies,” said Gov. Beshear. “By taking action right now, we can keep all of that from happening.”

As of Monday, there have been at least 588,926 coronavirus tests performed in Kentucky. The positivity rate currently stands at 5.58%. At least 7,466 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus.

For additional information, including up-to-date lists of positive cases and deaths, as well as breakdowns of coronavirus infections by county, race and ethnicity, click here (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/COVID19DailyReport.pdf).

Case Information – Sunday, July 26

Due to limited reporting on the weekends, some updated information is now available from Sunday, July 26.

As of Sunday, there were 586,679 coronavirus tests performed in Kentucky. The positivity rate was at 5.51% and at least 7,464 Kentuckians had recovered from the virus.

For a detailed look at coronavirus case information from Sunday, July 26, click here (https://chfs.ky.gov/cvdaily/COVID19DailyReport0726.pdf).

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Update

Expanding on some good news about fiscal year 2020, Gov. Beshear announced today that the General Fund revenues ended up $104.6 million above the budgeted estimate, at a total of nearly $12 billion. The General Fund surplus will be $177.5 million.

“COVID-19 has upended all of our lives, and what it’s going to do to our budget next year, without federal assistance, will be devastating. We believe it could cause the single largest budget cuts in our state’s history, and we hope Congress will act,” said Gov. Beshear. “But what I can tell you is that this year’s budget has turned out to be one of the better budgets we’ve had here in a while in Kentucky. We did not end the year with a deficit; we ended up $177.5 million in the black. … I hope the people of Kentucky know how fiscally responsible this administration is committed to being, especially during this crisis.”

Previously, Gov. Beshear said the improved economic footing means:

- No budget cuts to K-12 education, post-secondary education, and health and public safety, and
- No cuts to the Judicial or Legislative branch budgets.

The Governor also has said an increase in lottery revenues would result in another $15 million for need-based student financial aid this coming school year.

After holding back $15 million for necessary government expenses, Gov. Beshear said the $162.5 million going to the rain day fun, which is called the Budget Reserve Trust Fund, will bring it up to $465.7 million, which is the largest deposit to the fund from a year-end surplus.

“This extra amount to the rainy day fund is good, because we’re going to need it. As good as this looks, next year looks just as bad,” said Gov. Beshear.

Gov. Beshear cautioned that the outlook for fiscal year 2021 remains challenging.

He said that although the Road Fund revenue posted a shortfall of $60.3 million, no cuts were being made to the state construction program due to lower spending and help from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Gov. Beshear emphasized that successfully fighting to stop the spread of COVID-19 remains the most important component to safeguarding our economy.

Unemployment Insurance Claims Update

Amy Cubbage, general counsel of the Labor Cabinet, provided an update Monday on the state’s efforts to address the unprecedented number of unemployment insurance claims brought on by the pandemic.

There currently are approximately 68,000 initial claims waiting for resolution, though some significant percentage of those are duplicates. This includes 4,900 claims filed in March, 22,000 filed in April and 20,000 filed in May.

Of the 68,000 initial claims, approximately 63,000 have been investigated and are awaiting a written Notice of Determination.

“When someone loses a job and files an unemployment claim, it could be disputed or undisputed, and a claim could be disputed for multiple reasons. The undisputed claims are obviously the easy ones. We can process those quickly and get payments out. But if a claim is disputed, federal law requires the Office of Unemployment Insurance to issue a formal, written adjudication of the dispute,” said Cubbage. “That is a federal rule. We can’t waive that.”

Testing Update

Responding to some reports that some seeking coronavirus testing still are being asked to provide a doctor’s order, administration officials reiterated that the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Public Health (DPH) issued an order (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20200709_COVID-19_Blanket_Test_Order.pdf) removing any such requirement to receive a COVID-19 test.

Kentuckians can sign up for molecular diagnostic testing at more than 200 locations throughout the state, listed by county at kycovid19.ky.gov (file://govfs03/press/Press%20Releases/kycovid19.ky.gov).

More Information

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at governor.ky.gov (https://governor.ky.gov/news), kycovid19.ky.gov (https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19) and the Governor’s official social media accounts Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/GovAndyBeshear/), Twitter (https://twitter.com/GovAndyBeshear) and YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/c/GovAndyBeshear).

Kentuckians can also access translated COVID-19 information and daily summaries of the Governor's news conference at tinyurl.com/kygovespanol (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/kycovid19.es.pdf) (Spanish) and tinyurl.com/kygovtranslations (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/kycovid19.translations.pdf) (more than 20 additional languages).

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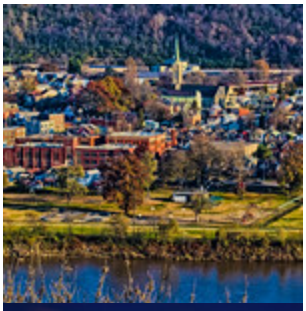
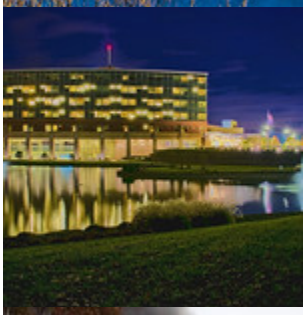
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/47184413071/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/32275086277/in/pool-773339@N20)
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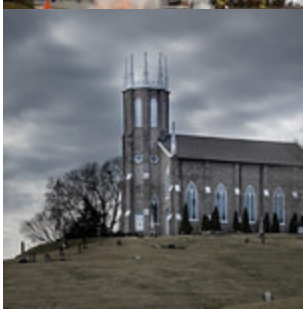
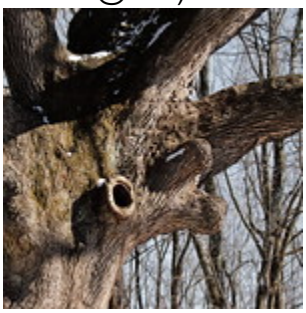
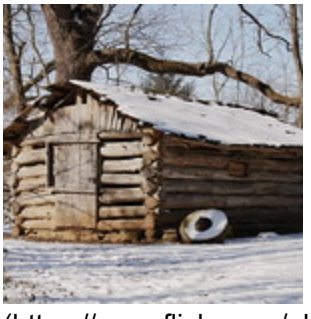
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/127721144@N05/46918072332/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/mcconnell_springs_photo_journal/46864760851/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/mcconnell_springs_photo_journal/46864760621/in/pool-773339@N20)

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