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Gov. Beshear Provides Update on Fight Against COVID-19

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 28, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Thursday updated Kentuckians on the fight against the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

“We are going to get through this together because we’ve got what it takes, we are strong enough, and no matter what they throw at us, we will make sure that we make the right decisions, that we do the right things and protect the lives of Kentuckians,” said Gov. Beshear.

Gov. Beshear and other officials also offered updates about unemployment insurance, the Green River Correctional Complex, Kentucky Kingdom, public pools, Kentucky State Parks and the Kentucky Horse Park.

Case information
As of 5 p.m. May 28, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 9,184 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 113 of which were newly confirmed Thursday.

“We don’t want 113 new people to have this virus, but in a day where we are testing so many, this number continues to show a decrease that we should all be very grateful for, but very committed to making sure that it continues,” said Gov. Beshear. “At one point, we expected by May 4 we’d have 16,000 new cases in a week. You prevented that. That’s what you did.”

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported nine new deaths Thursday, raising the total to 409 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Thursday include a 74-year-old woman, an 80-year-old man and two 85-year-old men from Boone County, a 71-year-old man from Grant County, a 66-year-old man from Jefferson County, a 72-year-old woman from Warren County, a 67-year-old woman from Butler County and a 70-year-old man from Kenton County.

He also honored the more than 100,000 Americans who have died from the coronavirus.

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“We have to recognize the toll that this virus has taken and the toll that it’s going to take until we get to that vaccine,” said Gov. Beshear. “We have to honor these families by committing to reduce the loss going forward.”

To recognize the souls lost in Kentucky, the nation and the world, Gov. Beshear asked the Rev. C.B. Akins Sr. of First Baptist Church Bracktown in Lexington to lead Kentuckians in a prayer.

“I pray God that you strip us of the false assurance that grows from pride in our powers and ignorance of our ignorance,” said Rev. Akins. “After you strip us, then bathe us in compassion so our shared pain will generate a powerful passion that will reach a divine purpose. As dark as this day may be, I am assured that you did not bring us this far to leave us now. We cling to an infinite hope. You have not given us the spirit of fear, but a power of love.”

At least 3,181 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).

Unemployment insurance

Today, Deputy Secretary of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Josh Benton announced that more than 15,000 March and April pending claims were processed this week.

Deputy Secretary Benton said, “We are putting our most seasoned staff on the most difficult claims.”

He also explained what it means when a claim is “under investigation.”

“That simply means that there’s something missing or a piece of information that is inaccurate that has to be investigated and reviewed in their claim before a determination can be made,” said Deputy Secretary Benton.

Finally, he updated Kentuckians on a security incident (https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=EducationCabinet&prId=416) that took place in the unemployment insurance system and the actions taken to address it.

A potential vulnerability in the online Unemployment Insurance Portal was reported to the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet’s Office of Technology Services (OTS) on April 23, 2020, at 9:17 a.m.

According to the report, some Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants could have been able to view the identity verification documents uploaded by other UI claimants. To date, no reports of identity theft or financial harm have been received.

“OTS prevented any further incidents by taking the UI Portal completely offline at 11:30 a.m. By noon, OTS had changed the system to ensure no one was able to view any uploaded documents,” said Deputy Secretary Benton. “By midnight, the security team had patched the software to correct the problem permanently.”

While the Governor’s Office of General Counsel has been told the breach has been corrected, the Governor is concerned with the situation and asked the Transportation Cabinet inspector general – who is independent from the Education Cabinet – to conduct a full review. The Governor is also reorganizing the office, which will soon be under the Labor Cabinet, and bringing in new leadership.

“It is time for better results,” the Governor said.

Green River Correctional Complex
After all mass testing results were received, Green River reported 358 inmate and 50 staff COVID-19 cases. The prison was divided into distinct housing areas and inmates are housed based on the results of their COVID-19 test: positive inmates, negative inmates with direct exposure, negative inmates with no exposure and medically vulnerable inmates.

Retesting is underway and, to date, six new inmates and one new staff member have tested positive for COVID-19.

Nearly 80% of staff have recovered from the virus. As of now, zero inmates are hospitalized. There is one employee in the hospital.

Secretary of the Executive Cabinet J. Michael Brown commended actions by the local health department, correctional officers and Green River inmates for helping level off the number of cases.

“The numbers speak for themselves,” said Sec. Brown. “We now have no inmates and only one staff member in the hospital out of the Green River Complex. This is an example of a plan implemented under stress, but one that worked. Hopefully the lessons learned here can be applied in the future for the safety of the entire state.”

Kentucky Kingdom
Today, Gov. Beshear announced Kentucky Kingdom will reopen June 29 with extensive precautions in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Based on talks we’ve had over the last several days, we can announce that Kentucky Kingdom will be able to open the week of June 29,” said Gov. Beshear. “We appreciate the operators of the park for working on the reopening plan.”

To see the state’s full reopening timeline and industry-specific guidance, visit healthyatwork.ky.gov. (healthyatwork.ky.gov)

Public pools
Today, Gov. Beshear announced that he is hopeful the state will be able to open a limited number of public pools the week of June 29 with extensive precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

He emphasized that local leaders may choose to keep pools closed based on their assessment of whether or not safety requirements can be met.

“That does not mean that a city will or will not open pools. There is a huge hit on budgets, and even states that have allowed it cities have not done it,” said Gov. Beshear. “I ask you to trust in your local leaders on how they choose to do that.”

Kentucky State Parks
[Editor’s note: Earlier today, Gov. Beshear announced four state parks would open June 1, which was accurate as 5 p.m. approached; however, the date was moved to June 8.]

Today, Gov. Beshear announced that the state will reopen the four Kentucky State Park lodges on June 8 that were previously designated to provide temporary housing for low acuity COVID-19 patients.

The four parks are:

- Lake Cumberland State Resort Park;

- Lake Barkley State Resort Park;
- Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort Park; and
- Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park.

“Thanks to where we are, we are now going to be able to add every state park to our reopening,” said Gov. Beshear.

As the state continues to see a decline in cases, officials have determined that state park lodging is no longer necessary for future COVID-19 response efforts. Safely reopening the parks will create more in-state tourism opportunities for Kentuckians to enjoy and will help local economies rebound.

Lake Cumberland State Resort Park will open with limited occupancy as a result of ongoing construction renovations. To make reservations at one of our parks, visit parks.ky.gov (parks.ky.gov).

The Governor also announced that in partnership with Fayette County Public Schools, the Kentucky Horse Park will host a Senior Send Off on May 28 and 29. Each night will feature different schools with teachers and administrators along the 3-mile Southern Lights route.

“People are making these celebrations really special for our graduates,” said Gov. Beshear. “I know they’re different and I know there’s sacrifice, but I think students will carry these experiences with them for their entire lives.”

The Kentucky Horse Park will reopen on June 11, and host its first competitive horse show event without spectators from June 17 to June 21.

For more information on the commonwealth’s full reopening schedule, visit healthyatwork.ky.gov. (healthyatwork.ky.gov)

Informational videos for kids
Gov. Beshear opened today’s news conference with two videos to help kids learn about the importance of wearing masks and other strategies to stay healthy at home and at work.

The Governor said, “Our children are bearing the brunt of some of this trauma, we need to provide advice for parents about how to talk to kids about the virus.”

To view the videos, go to our website (https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19) or click here. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKMUwJYJfd0)

Testing expansion
Gov. Beshear continued to urge Kentuckians to get tested for COVID-19.

Information on how to register at sites throughout the commonwealth visit kycovid19.ky.gov (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/Pages/COVID-19-Drive-Thru-Locations.aspx).

He announced that the state has seen a downward trajectory of cases within a 14-day period, even with increased testing. Kentucky was recognized today (https://www.vox.com/2020/5/28/21270515/coronavirus-covid-reopen-economy-social-distancing-states-map-data?fbclid=IwAR1DJMYMI3wDPNHFUK_AJAixfkxsUE-HiF_-qb2_bL8Brkz227KD83NKNa4) as one of the top three states prepared for a safe reopening.

Absentee Ballot Application Portal online
Gov. Beshear is encouraging all voters to use a new Absentee Ballot Application Portal now available online. A link to the State Board of Elections’ portal can be found at govoteky.com

(https://vrsws.sos.ky.gov/ovrweb/govoteky). He urged everyone who plans to vote in next month's primary elections to go to the portal and request an absentee mail-in ballot.

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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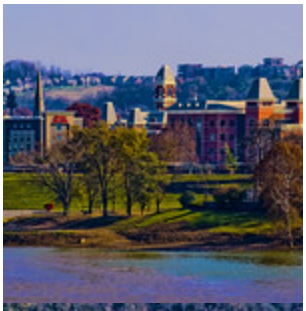
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/47184596121/in/pool-773339@N20)
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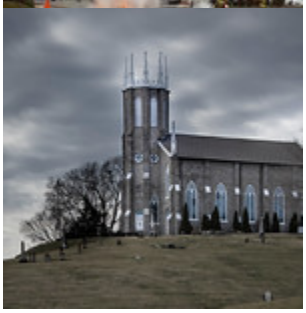
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/127721144@N05/46918072332/in/pool-773339@N20)
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