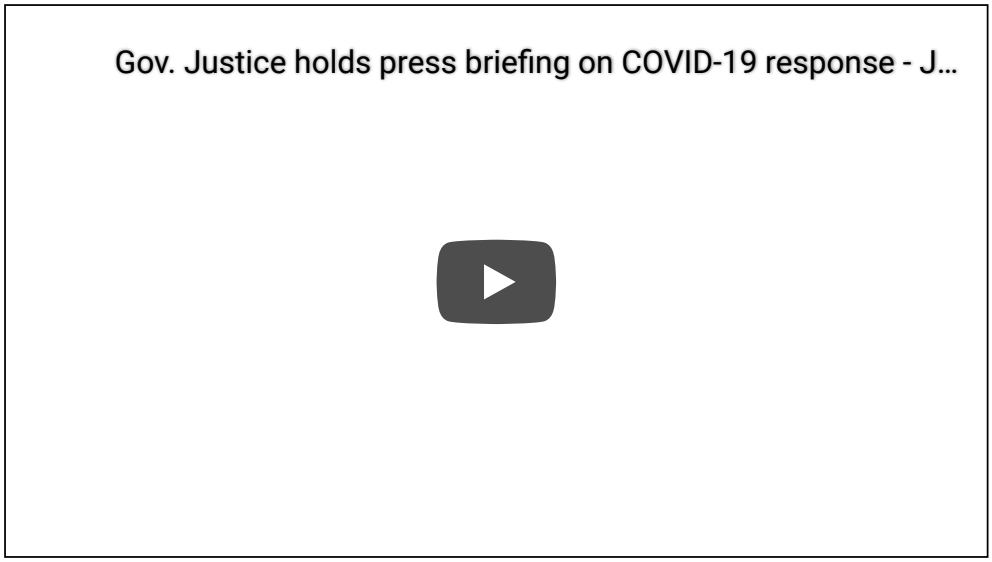
COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice announces vaccines to be offered to all West Virginians age 70 and older; introduces financial aid program for renters

1/13/2021



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.

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION UPDATE: VACCINES TO BE OFFERED TO ALL WEST VIRGINIANS AGE 70 AND OLDER

During Wednesday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that West Virginia will begin offering COVID-19 vaccines to all state residents age 70 and older beginning immediately.

The Governor added that the CDC is recommending that all states offer vaccines to those age 65 and older, as well as those with pre-existing conditions or comorbidities, as soon as possible.

"We're dropping our age right now from 80 to 70," Gov. Justice said. "And next week, if we continue to push – and God knows we will – as quickly as we can get to a place where we're going to have enough vaccines to drop the age to 65, we're going to go to 65."

Meanwhile, the Governor reported that West Virginia continues to lead the nation in the rate of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration.

West Virginia remains the top-ranked state in the country for vaccine distribution on a per capita basis, according to the **CDC's COVID-19 Vaccination Tracker** (https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations).

As of Wednesday, 100,696 1st doses and 16,434 2nd doses have been administered, totaling 117,130 doses administered overall statewide.

West Virginia continues to rank among the nation's leaders with a 1st dose administration rate of 85.4 percent. As of yesterday, every 1st dose of vaccine that has been delivered to the state has either already been administered or is assigned to a name to be administered in the next few days.

"I think it is an incredible accomplishment," Gov. Justice said. "Think about how many lives are being saved by us leading the nation.

"We have put in arms somewhere close to just under 30,000 vaccines to our elderly, and that does not count the additional vaccines we gave out at all of our state's nursing homes and assisted living facilities," Gov. Justice continued. "How many lives did we save? A week or so ago, those people that were 80-plus had no hope because they were told they weren't going to get their vaccines until early April. We've got almost 30,000 of them vaccinated now."

Click here to view photo album

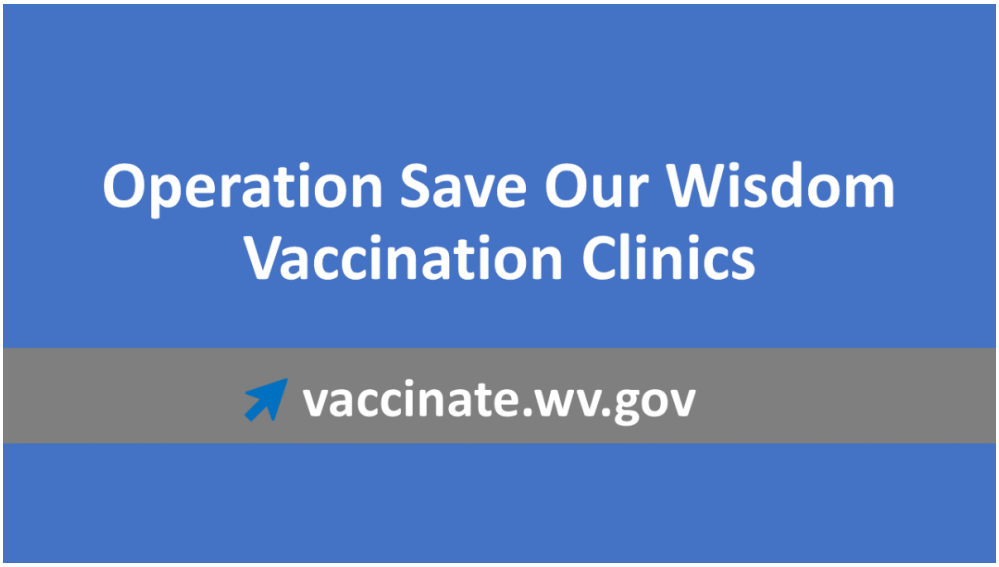
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157717875018068)

The Governor went on to say that yesterday he took a call with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, who complimented West Virginia's vaccination efforts.

"He called and said 'I want you to go on and tell all the other governors what you're doing in West Virginia because we're failing across the rest of our country,'" Gov. Justice said. "We have additional vaccines coming next week, and we're continuing to push the HHS hard for even more."

Gov. Justice went on to announce that 14 vaccine clinics will be held this week through operation "Save Our Wisdom." Approximately 6,300 vaccines in total will be allocated to the clinics.

The free vaccination clinics are for West Virginia residents only. They will be held in Berkeley, Braxton, Cabell, Greenbrier, Hardy, Harrison, Hancock, Kanawha, Monongalia, Randolph, and Wood counties. Many clinics require appointments and walk-ins will not be accepted unless it is specifically designated as a walk-in clinic.



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

"As operation 'Save Our Wisdom' continues to ramp up, I encourage all West Virginians who are age 70 and older to take advantage of the opportunity to receive a life-saving vaccine," Gov. Justice said.

Additional clinics are planned for next week as vaccine supplies continue to increase.

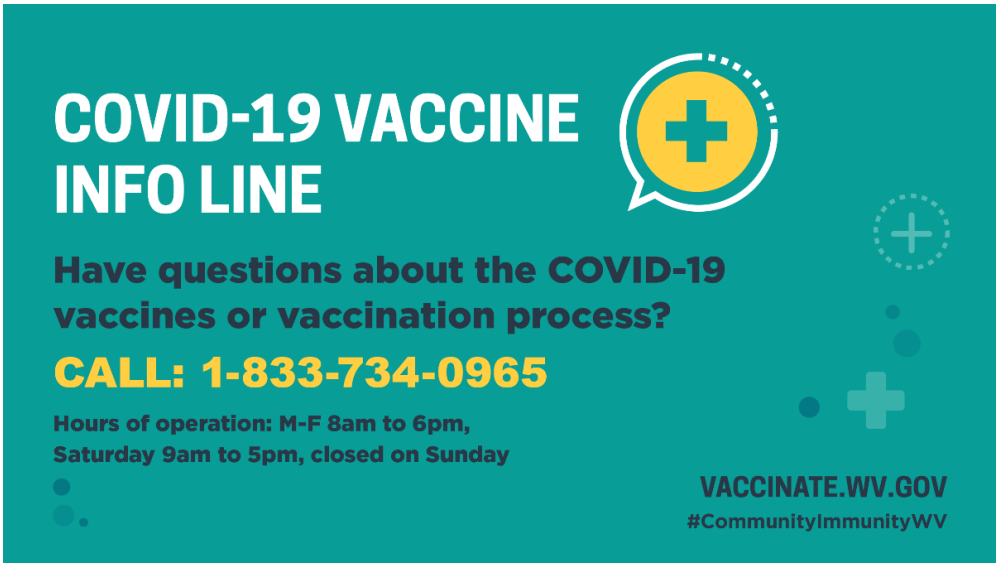
To date, 25,774 West Virginians have been vaccinated through this program.

The Governor also once again provided a reminder that the State has launched a new COVID-19 Vaccine Info Line to help West Virginians get information on the distribution process and availability of COVID-19 vaccines.

VACCINE INFO LINE: 1-833-734-0965

The line operates Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visit **vaccinate.wv.gov** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx) for more information, including details on vaccine availability and other frequently asked questions.



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

MOUNTAINEER RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice announced an upcoming initiative called the Mountaineer Rental Assistance Program, which will provide aid to renters and landlords who have been impacted by COVID-19.

"I am excited," Gov. Justice said. "If you're renting or you are a landlord, this is a really big deal."

The program will be administered by the West Virginia Housing Development Fund (WVHDF) and will provide direct financial assistance to renters who have lost their job, had their income reduced, or suffered a significant cost or financial hardship because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Working with our partners at the U.S. Treasury, there is significant money on the way to achieve just this," Gov. Justice said.

The program is not open yet. Gov. Justice said that he will provide additional updates about the program when they become available.

"We are waiting for additional guidance from the Treasury. We expect that additional guidance in the coming days," Gov. Justice said. "We are expecting those funds to be administered to us in late January.

"I want to thank the West Virginia Housing Development Fund Executive Director Erica Boggess for all the great work that she's doing," Gov. Justice continued. "It's really great news to people that are really having a really hard time in regard to their rent. This is really good stuff."

More information is now available on the **WVHDF's website** (https://www.wvhdf.com/programs/mountaineer-rental-assistance-program).

(https://www.wvhdf.com/programs/mountaineer-rental-assistance-program)

CITY/COUNTY GRANT PROGRAM THROUGH CARES ACT FUNDING CONCLUDES

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice announced that the State's program to provide CARES Act dollars to cities and counties across West Virginia has now concluded, as all available funds have been exhausted.

The Governor reported that a grand total of $264,478,307.01 has been distributed through the program; significantly higher than the original $200 million originally allocated to this effort. Gov. Justice increased the allocation twice to keep up with the demand for the popular relief program.

"It was an unbelievable lifesaver for many of our cities and counties," Gov. Justice said.

The deadline for cities and counties to submit applications was Dec. 15, 2020.

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state is now 27,982, down from 29,257 active cases during the Governor's previous COVID-19 briefing on Monday.

West Virginia has recorded 1,189 new positive cases over the past 24 hours.

The number of active hospitalizations is now 765 patients, up from 755 on Monday, with 204 of those patients currently in the ICU.

The cumulative percent of positive cases has now reached a record high of 5.44 percent.

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

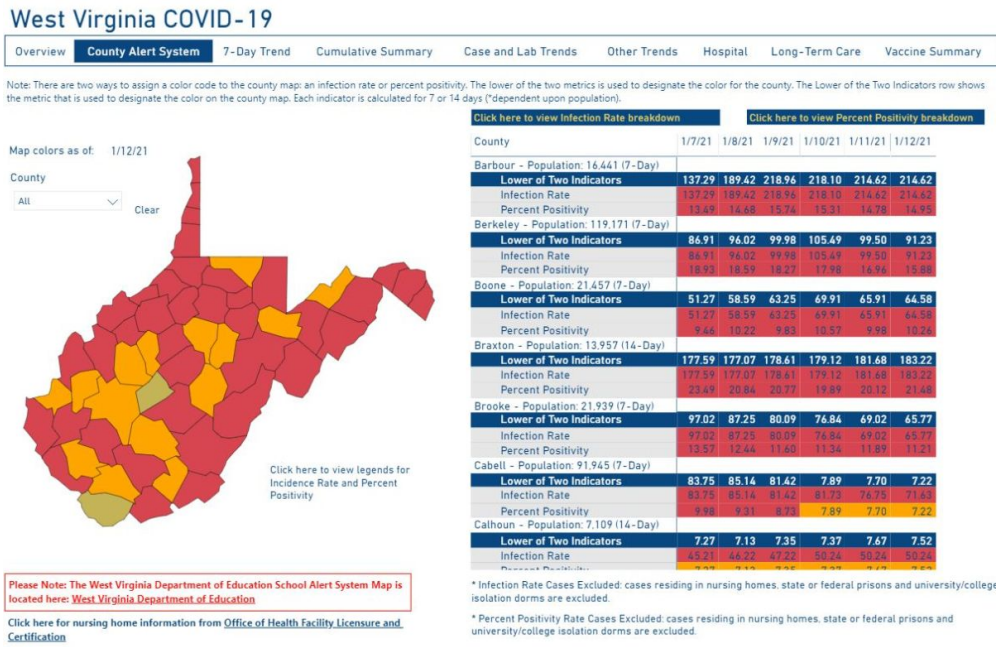
As of Wednesday afternoon, the **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/)– also known as Rt – improved to 0.93; the 3rd-best such rate of any state in the country.

WEDNESDAY MAP UPDATE

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

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.

Red counties: **38** (Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Doddridge, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Marion, Marshall, Mason, Mercer, Mingo, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Preston, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Taylor, Tyler, Wayne, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood)
Orange counties: **15** (Cabell, Calhoun, Fayette, Kanawha, Lewis, Logan, Mineral, Monongalia, Putnam, Roane, Summers, Tucker, Upshur, Webster, Wyoming)
Gold counties: **2** (Clay, McDowell)
Yellow counties: **0**
Green counties: **0**



(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

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that, per the West Virginia Department of Education, there remain four active outbreaks in public schools across the state. These outbreaks account for 15 confirmed cases.

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

West Virginia has 11 active church-related outbreaks across six counties: Marion, McDowell, Mingo, Monongalia, Nicholas, and Summers counties. These outbreaks account for a total of 114 cases, down from 132 as of Monday.

There are now 105 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state, down from 111 outbreaks on Monday.

The Governor also reported that there are now 380 active inmate cases across the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) system, down from 404 on Monday. Among these cases, 284 are at Tygart Valley Regional Jail and 66 are at Saint Marys Correctional Center.

There are 37 active staff cases across the DCR system, down from 57 on Monday.

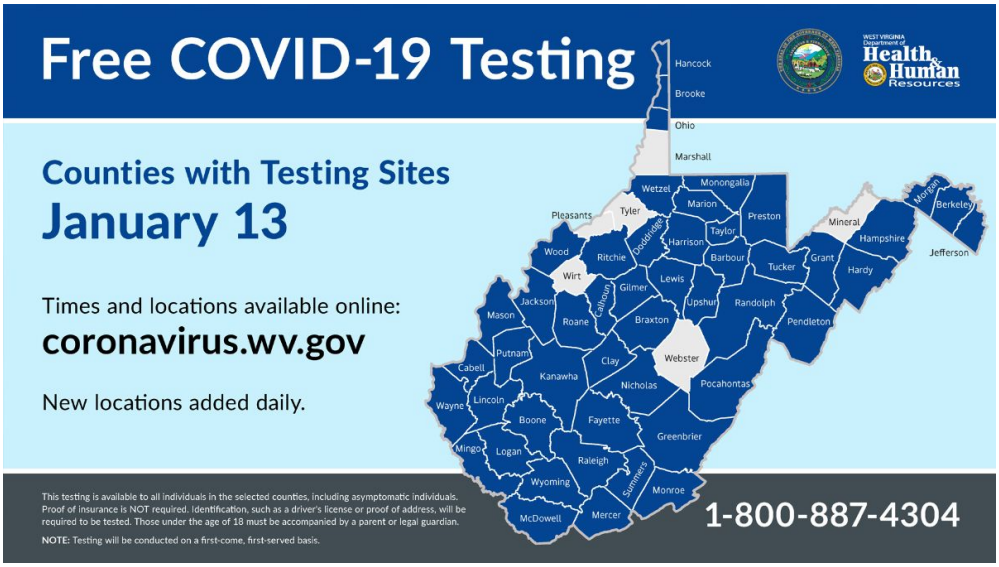
Click here to view the latest corrections facility update (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx)

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 49 counties across the state that have free testing events scheduled through the Governor's Aggressive Testing initiative.

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.

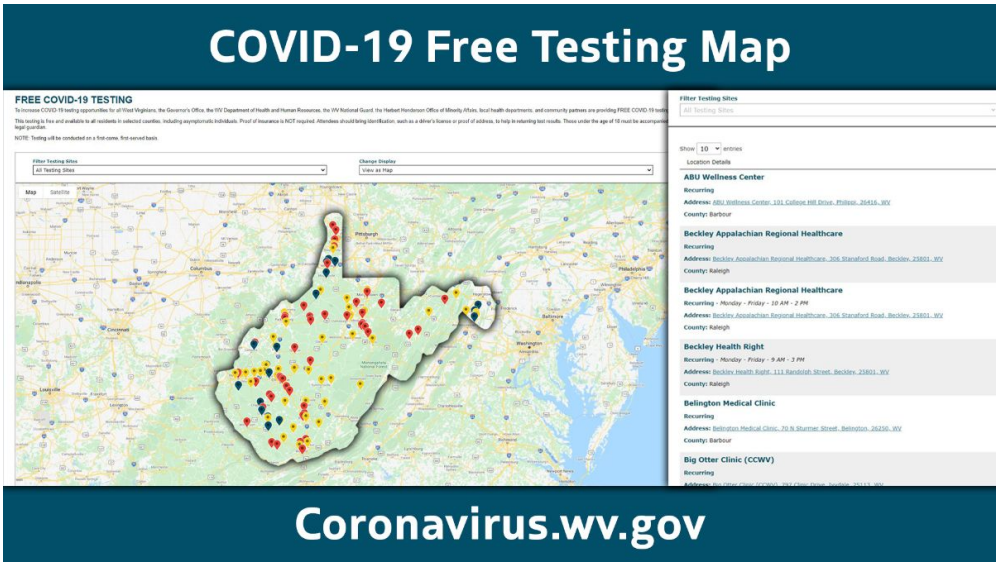
Click here to view all locations, dates, times, and more details (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



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

An interactive online map of all free testing locations across West Virginia is available on the state's **COVID-19 website** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx). Users can filter the map by type of testing site, including daily testing events, recurring testing events, as well as Walgreens and Fruth Pharmacy testing locations. Users can also filter by county. Each location is marked on the map with a pin. After finding a testing location nearby, users are able to click on the pin for more information about that particular testing site, including the specific location and timeframe during which testing will be held.

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)

UPDATED FACE COVERING REQUIREMENT IN EFFECT; SIGNS AVAILABLE FOR BUSINESSES

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided a reminder that his broadened Statewide Indoor Face Covering Requirement remains in effect.

The order requires all West Virginians age 9 and older to wear a face covering at all times inside all indoor public places, regardless of whether or not they are able to maintain proper social distance. The order requires that all businesses and organizations that invite the public into their facilities must post adequate signage advising guests of the requirement and are also responsible for enforcing the requirement to ensure it is being followed.

Click here to read more details about the face covering requirement (/Pages/Statewide-Indoor-Face-Covering-Requirement.aspx)

Posters are available on the DHHR's **online Face Covering Toolkit** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx) for businesses or organizations to print and display. Social media graphics are also available for download and use by the general public.

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx)

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT REMINDER

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice offered a reminder that West Virginia plans to begin utilizing monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19 more frequently, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent emergency authorization of the treatment.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system's ability to fight off viruses.

The Governor again urged all West Virginians over the age of 65 who test positive to ask their doctor if they qualify for this type of treatment.

WEST VIRGINIANS CALLED UPON TO DONATE BLOOD AND PLASMA

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice once again encouraged all West Virginians to consider donating blood and plasma through the American Red Cross.

In the Governor's recent call with the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Vice President Mike Pence said that there is still a shortage of plasma and blood all across the nation.

Those fully recovered from a verified COVID-19 diagnosis may have plasma in their blood containing COVID-19 antibodies that can attack this virus. This plasma is being evaluated as a possible treatment for currently ill COVID-19 patients.

For more information, visit **redcross.org** (https://www.redcross.org/) or call the local American Red Cross offices at **304-340-3650**.

(https://www.redcross.org/)

FLU VACCINE REMINDER

Additionally Wednesday, 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.

In addition to providing protection from the flu, this vaccine helps reduce the burden on hospitals and healthcare systems.

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

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

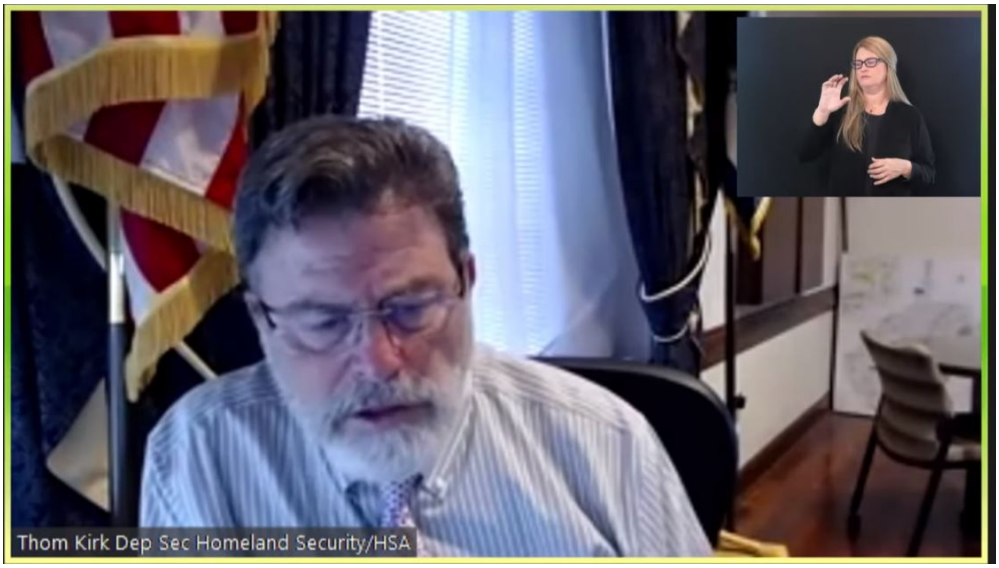
CAPITOL SECURITY PREPARATIONS UPDATE

Also during Wednesday's briefing, Gov. Justice was joined by West Virginia Department of Homeland Secretary Deputy Secretary Thom Kirk, who provided a brief update on security preparations that are already underway ahead of the upcoming legislative session and Inauguration Ceremony.

"At this time, we're not aware of any critical threats in our region or to any of the governmental employee's buildings or any of our state legislators," Deputy Secretary Kirk said. "We receive a lot of information. We have meetings, briefings, cell phone calls daily, sometimes hourly depending on what's happening. When we receive this information, we analyze it, then we brief the Governor's Office.

"Right now, to say that we have no credible threats to our region does not mean that we're not remaining vigilant. In fact, it's just the opposite," Kirk continued. "We're trying to do, like the Governor says, we're trying to keep the citizens of the state and the property of the state as safe and secure as we can.

"At this time, we are not aware of any credible threats in our region. But we will continue to watch this and we will continue to brief the Governor and his staff."



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).

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157717875018068)

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