

Statewide Measures and Local Government Initiatives

Administration

On March 6, Governor Wolf announced the first two presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, and subsequently signed an [emergency disaster declaration](#) to provide increased support to state agencies involved in COVID-19 response. The declaration included:

- Emergency funding for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency;
- Allowed for the utilization of emergency procurement procedures; and
- Suspension of regulations, the strict compliance with which, would hinder necessary response action.

On March 8, Governor Wolf issued “COVID-19 for [Information Businesses](#)”, using the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) suggested measures for guidance.

On March 12 (COVID-19 cases numbering 22), the Governor and Secretary of Health provided [additional guidance](#) for the state and mitigation efforts for Montgomery County in particular due to the high concentration of confirmed cases. At the state level, the Governor provided the following guidance:

- Encouraged suspension of large gatherings of 250 persons or more;
- Discouraged citizens from traveling to recreational activities such as gyms, theaters, malls; and
- Encouraged religious leaders to exercise discretion in order to mitigate illness.

On March 13 (COVID-19 cases numbering 35) Governor Wolf announced a statewide [closure of schools](#) for ten business days, effective Monday, March 16.

As of March 16, employees under the Governor’s jurisdiction at Capitol Complex Offices in Dauphin County have been ordered to work remotely if their position provides for such under management directives. Also, Governor Wolf [ordered](#) all restaurants and bars in Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties to close their dine-in facilities for 14 days. The Administration also strongly urged non-essential businesses in the southeastern counties to close.

At a press conference on the afternoon of March 16, the Governor [announced](#) that the shutdown previously applied to the counties listed above would apply statewide as of March 17. Later that evening, Governor Wolf [updated](#) businesses on guidance for COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

The Administration continues to strongly encourage non-essential businesses to close for at least 14 days. According to the press release:

Non-essential businesses include public-facing industries such as entertainment, hospitality, and recreation facilities, including but not limited to community and recreation centers; gyms, including yoga, barre and spin facilities; hair salons and barber shops, nail salons and spas; casinos; concert venues; theaters; sporting event venues and

golf courses; retail facilities, including shopping malls except for pharmacy or other health care facilities within retail operations.

Essential services and sectors include but are not limited to food processing, agriculture, industrial manufacturing, feed mills, construction, trash collection, grocery and household goods (including convenience stores), home repair/hardware and auto repair, pharmacy and other medical facilities, biomedical and healthcare, post offices and shipping outlets, insurance, banks, gas stations, laundromats, veterinary clinics and pet stores, warehousing, storage, and distribution, public transportation, and hotel and commercial lodging.

“The Wolf Administration is relying on businesses to act now before the Governor or the Secretary of Health finds it necessary to compel closures under the law for the interest of public health, including [section 7301](#) of the Emergency Management Services Code.”

Legislature

The House of Representatives and Senate of Pennsylvania are on a 12 hour call, with the session calendar in flux. The legislature is taking measures to keep large groups and nonessential personnel out of Capitol office buildings.

On March 16, the House passed [H.R. 834](#) (Cutler, R-Lancaster), which are temporary rules that will no longer require members to be present on the House floor. [According](#) to the House Republicans, highlights of the rule changes include:

- Allowing designated voting. Under this temporary rule, members will notify their party’s whip of their voting position on legislation, and the whip, or a member designated by the whip, will file a member’s vote on the House floor. As for the floor itself, only the speaker, leaders, whips or designated members to those positions would need to be present. The process is the same for committee votes, with the relevant party chairperson collecting the votes ahead of a scheduled vote.
- Suspension of legislative time requirements. This temporary rule shortens all required wait periods related to legislation to three hours. Specifically, the 24-hour posting requirement for bills before a committee is now three hours, the 12-hour requirement after a bill is amended on second consideration is now three hours, and the six-hour wait requirement for a bill to be voted on concurrence is now three hours.
- Blackout mailing period adjustment. Under current rules, no legislative mailing can be sent out within 60 days of an election. The temporary rule passed today lifts the restrictions to allow members to send electronic communications related strictly to COVID-19 information.

House Republicans also [issued](#) a press release in response to the Governor’s March 16 press conference. Their members “strongly urge the Governor to clarify the order to give business owners and the Pennsylvanians who rely on their services the guidance they deserve in these difficult times”.

Allegheny County & Pittsburgh

Mandatory paid sick leave for workers who need to stay home due to COVID-19 is in effect in the City of Pittsburgh.

Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald has issued [guidance](#), encouraging all non-essential businesses to close for at least 14 days, beginning on Monday, March 16.

Beginning at noon on Monday, March 16, non-emergency City officials and facilities will be [closed](#) to the public until further notice.

City of Philadelphia

On Monday, March 16, Mayor Jim Kenney [announced](#) that only essential commercial establishments should remain open. The changes in commercial activity will last through at least March 27. In addition, non-essential City government operations are halted and government buildings will be closed to the public effective March 17.

Philadelphia is prohibiting public gatherings of more than 1,000 people and strongly recommending no gatherings of more than 250 people. More information can be found [here](#)

The City also [extended](#) its paid sick leave law to cover public health like COVID-19.

Resources for Businesses and Citizens

The Department Health and Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) issued a letter to provide [guidance](#) on the types of businesses that are urged to close.

DCED has provided the following contact information for businesses impacted by COVID-19: 1-866-466-3972; ra-dcedcs@pa.gov.

The Department of Labor and Industry has issued [guidance](#) on when displaced employees might be eligible for unemployment compensation (UC) or workers' compensation (WC) benefits.

The website <https://www.pacast.com/> has been established to provide citizens and businesses with information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Secretary of Labor and Industry Jerry Oleksiak [announced](#) that workers who are impacted by COVID-19 may be eligible for Unemployment and Workers' Compensation benefits.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court [declared](#) a statewide judiciary emergency effective until April 14. This gives county president judges authority to declare individual county judicial emergencies, should they deem it appropriate.