

*For a complete look at federal and state action related to the coronavirus, visit MWC's [website](#).*

## Updates from Gov. Northam's Daily Press Conference

### April 20

On Monday, April 20, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Testing:** To ensure Virginia's testing efforts are coordinated, Governor Northam announced the creation of a testing workgroup, which will be led by Dr. Karen Remley and Dr. Lilian Peake. The workgroup will include representatives from the hospital association, long-term care facilities, emergency room physicians, free clinics, private labs, the Department of Health, and the Department of Emergency Management. The workgroup will focus on three things:
  - Expand test sites and testing criteria (Current criteria focuses on individuals who are hospitalized, individuals that have been exposed to known cases, emergency responders, and those in long-term care facilities or are about to enter long-term care facilities)
  - Increase testing volume and timeliness to decrease backlog and keep up with demand
  - Address the factors that limit testing (i.e. not enough supplies, viral transport)The state is also encouraging doctors that have symptomatic patients to test their patients as supply allows. Due to lack of testing, Governor Northam noted that many doctors have been relying on a clinical diagnosis rather than a test. Today, Dr. Norman Oliver will send a clinician letter encouraging doctors to test those patients. Additionally, the CDC will send teams to each state to focus on testing vulnerable populations. The CDC is also allowing state labs to approve new tests. The CDC is helping states obtain more swabs and allowing more flexibilities in the testing components that states use.
- **Data:** Governor Northam announced that the Department of Health will expand the data it shares with the public. It will share the number of cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities by locality. It will also share this data and demographic data at the health district level.
- **Executive Order 57:** Governor Northam noted that [EO 57](#) did not include physician's assistants and said it was an oversight.
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Long-term care facilities represent the majority of the outbreaks in the Commonwealth (55 percent). Cases in long-term care facilities represent about 10 percent of the cases in the Commonwealth. The long-term care facilities taskforce is working with facilities that have not yet experienced an outbreak on infection control. The taskforce will be working with the CDC on virtual assessments for infection control. The taskforce plans to deploy Virginia Department of Health employees to facilities that are in the early stages of an outbreak to do onsite infection control assessments. Dr. Forlano, who leads the taskforce, said the taskforce plans to issue guidance on removing residents from long-term care facilities and how to best make that decision and ensure the safety of the resident.

## April 17

On Friday, April 17, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Reopening Plans:** Governor Northam said the White House's guidelines for the reopening of states are consistent with what Virginia is doing and will continue to do. Northam noted that the phased-in approach requires positive test to be on a downward trend for 14 days, and Virginia has not yet met that criteria. Virginia received \$1.6 billion in federal stimulus funds to use for the COVID-19 response and to aid local governments. Virginia also received approval from FEMA to provide hotel accommodations for first responders and essential personnel working to combat the COVID-19 epidemic.
- **PPE:** Hospitals continue to need PPE. The first shipment from Northfield arrived in Virginia and is being distributed. This shipment includes more than 24K N95 masks as well as gloves and gowns. National supply chain issues remain and Virginia continues to diversify its suppliers.
- **Staffing:** Governor Northam signed [Executive Order 57](#), which eases licensing restrictions on some medical professionals, such as nurse practitioners and doctors from other states. It also allows for the expanded use of telehealth. EO 57 enables Virginia-licensed nurse practitioners with two or more years of clinical experience to practice without a collaborative agreement. Out of state doctors will also be able to practice in certain Virginia facilities. The press release on EO 57 can be found [here](#).
- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam announced he is waiving regulatory rules around staffing to ensure that facilities can recruit staff and volunteers more quickly. The state is also connecting Virginia Medical Reserve Corps volunteers with facilities to help fill staffing needs. The state plans to reach out to local health systems that have furloughed workers to encourage them to help. Virginia is also expanding testing criteria to include people that are about to be admitted into congregate settings, like long-term care facilities. Governor Northam noted that any facility that is experiencing an outbreak will be able to test every resident and staff. UVA and VCU are partnering with the state to provide these tests to the long-term care facilities along with the state lab.
- **Department of Corrections:** Governor Northam announced a 67 percent decrease in the number of people entering jails on misdemeanor charges as a result of guidance he issued to local criminal justice officials. Since early March, the local jail population has decreased 17 percent. The press release on this announcement can be found [here](#).
- **Jobs:** Virginia had more than 410K unemployment claims in the last month. Governor Northam said they have added call centers in Grundy and Newport News, 50 additional employees, and a private call center to help keep up with the demand.
- **Remote Voting:** Governor Northam said he was open to General Assembly using remote voting measures and commended Speaker Filler-Corn for looking into that option. Northam noted that there is a possibility for a special session in July, August, or September after the state is able to reforecast state revenue.
- **Elective procedures:** Governor Northam said he hopes to allow elective procedures as soon as they can be done safely and there is enough PPE. On March 25, Governor Northam issued an [Order of Public Health](#) to stop elective surgeries until April 24, 2020. He noted that they have not made a decision on extending the date for elective procedures, but said that Virginia will coordinate with its surrounding states on that date.

## April 15

On Wednesday, April 15, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- **Executive Order 53:** Governor Northam is extending [Executive Order 53](#) for two more weeks. It will now expire on May 8, 2020. It was originally supposed to expire on April 23, 2020. Governor Northam emphasized that the stay at home order is in effect until June 10. He also emphasized that things will not go back to how they were before the pandemic, suggesting that the new normal will include covering your face, spending more time at home, teleworking, and avoiding large gatherings. Governor Northam said that the business community will be involved in the conversation to ease restrictions in Virginia. The Governor noted that Virginia had a strong economy before the virus. For example, March general fund revenues were 10.8 percent higher than last year.
- **Childcare:** Governor Northam announced that \$70 million from the CARES Act will go to support essential workers with children under the age of 12 and early childhood education. Specifically, the money will go towards:
  - Direct flexible cash assistance to the centers that have remained open
  - Preparing schools to serve as emergency childcare centers where needed
  - Eliminating copayments until June for families that are receiving federal childcare subsidy dollars
  - Making additional funding available to centers that accept federal subsidy dollars but have closed

Additional information for providers and parents can be found at [www.childcareva.com](http://www.childcareva.com).

- **Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam said that the state is doing everything it can at Canterbury Rehabilitation Center and other long-term care facilities. Governor Northam noted that these facilities face challenges with PPE, testing, and staffing. Northam also noted that adequate funding is a challenge, but hopes his budget amendment to address this issue will be approved. Dr. Laurie Forlano, who is leading a long-term care taskforce, noted that the taskforce is developing a systems level approach to strategically respond to outbreaks.

## April 13

On Monday, April 13, Governor Northam made the following announcements in regards to Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- **Data:** There 5,747 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia. Dr. Norman Oliver, the state health commissioner, said Virginia is one of 12 states that reports race and ethnicity data and noted that Virginia is trying to improve the collection of this data.
- **Modeling:** The University of Virginia created a Virginia-specific model, which shows that our social distancing measures are working. Virginians are slowing the spread of the virus. UVA's model also show that Virginia hospitals will be able to handle the surge of patients that are predicted. Governor Northam emphasized that the model shows that if we lift social distancing measures too soon, numbers will spike and there could be a

second wave and peak. Governor Northam said he will lift the stay at home order when it is safe to do so.

- **Education:** The state is making additional educational resources available to teachers and students. Governor Northam announced that the state is expanding Virtual Virginia, Virginia's online education platform, to allow every teacher in the Commonwealth to host virtual classes through June 30. Northam noted that students without internet access can download content and use it offline. In addition, four Virginia public media stations launched VA TV Classroom today. The Department of Education also released [new guidance](#) for teachers and schools on high quality equitable instruction during the pandemic. The guidance is a result of the Continuity of Learning Taskforce that the Department of Education convened to issue guidance on how schools can prevent the widening of achievement gaps and meet the social and emotional needs of students while schools are closed.
- **Nursing Homes and Long-term Care Facilities:** Governor Northam noted that he proposed a budget amendment to increase rates paid to nursing homes and long-term care facilities by an additional \$20 per Medicaid recipient per day, which will help these facilities address staffing issues during the pandemic. Governor Northam said his administration is also looking at how the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps can help staff long-term care facilities. Dr. Laurie Forlano noted that the data dashboard for long-term care facilities is updated on the website. Of the 97 outbreaks that have been reported, 53 of them have been in long-term care facilities. At least 554 cases are at long-term care facilities. Dr. Forlano said they learned of an outbreak in a facility over the weekend and the taskforce was able to help ensure testing capacity, mobilize staffing, and obtain PPE. The taskforce in general will continue to work on policy solutions to sustain that kind of response in the future. When asked about family notification, Dr. Forlano noted that family notification is done at the facility level and the taskforce will continue to recommend that facilities keep families informed. The taskforce is contemplating how to empower facilities with the right communication tools to help with family notification.
- **Legislative:** Governor Northam noted that he reviewed 1,291 bills by Saturday night. Northam said he proposed 144 amendments to the state budget. Eighty-three (83) of the amendments freeze discretionary spending of \$874.6 million in FY21 and \$1.4 billion in FY22. Forty-nine (49) amendments are language amendments that relax specific requirements and give flexibilities to agencies and institutions of higher education as they conduct business during COVID-19. Governor Northam also recommended delaying the prohibition of games of skill for a year and recommended taxing them. The estimated revenue for taxing games of skill for a year is \$125-\$150 million. Governor Northam proposed that the tax revenue be used for homelessness, healthcare needs, and small businesses.
- **Recreational and Entertainment Businesses:** Governor Northam noted that on Wednesday he will make an announcement about the date on which recreational and entertainment businesses, such as salons and barbershops, will be able to reopen. [Executive Order 53](#) required these businesses to close until Thursday, April 23; however, Governor Northam said this date will be extended.

## April 10

On Friday, April 10, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- **Nursing Homes:** Governor Northam is giving Dr. Laurie Forlano, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health at the Virginia Department of Health, a larger role in leading Virginia's efforts to help nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Dr. Forlano will lead a taskforce made up of several secretariats and agencies that will focus on 3 tasks:
  - (1) work with Secretary of Finance to ensure nursing homes and long-term care facilities have the resources they need to fight COVID-19;
  - (2) work with facilities to strengthen staffing and increase infection control measures, including ensuring these facilities have enough testing and PPE;
  - (3) ensure the public and the facilities are getting the information and data they need about this virus.

Governor Northam emphasized that Dr. Forlano will ensure that Virginia is doing everything it can to help these facilities. Additionally, Dr. Forlano gave an update on long-term care facility data. As of today, there are 45 outbreaks in long-term care facilities. There are 525 cases in long-term care facilities, representing about 10 percent of all cases in Virginia. Dr. Forlano noted that this data is based off an outbreak system, and may not track exactly with the disease surveillance system that is on the VDH website. VDH is building additional tools to track the data.

- **PPE/Staffing:** Governor Northam said Virginia is using more avenues to recruit additional medical volunteers through the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps. The Corps now has 13,000 volunteers. Governor Northam is going to reach out to Virginia's colleges, universities, and medical schools to recruit additional volunteers. Governor Northam encouraged nurses, nurse practitioners, and nursing students to apply. Regarding the oversight relationship between nurse practitioners and doctors, Governor Northam said the current relationship is working and Virginia will continue to work within that model, but encouraged those with issues to reach out to his administration. Additionally, Governor Northam suggested that hospitals should reach out to VCU, so they can adopt their innovative method to clean and reuse N95 masks.
- **Department of Corrections:** Governor Northam is proposing an amendment to the state budget that would give the Department of Corrections the authority to release offenders with one year or less remaining in their sentences. The offenders must not be a threat to public safety and also must demonstrate good behavior. The amendment will have an emergency clause, so it will go into effect immediately should the General Assembly approve it and it will last for the duration of the Governor's Executive Order. The General Assembly will vote on the amendment when they reconvene on April 22. Between now and then, the DOC will implement reentry planning for these individuals. This includes ensuring the released person has somewhere to go and has the medications they need for 3 months. Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran noted that the amendment would apply to approximately 2,000 offenders.
- **Unemployment:** Governor Northam said this health crisis has led to an economic crisis. During the last week of March, 114K people applied for unemployment benefits, and last week, over 147K people filed for unemployment. In total, over 306K people have applied for unemployment in the last three weeks in Virginia. Last week alone, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) issued more than 191,000 payments totaling more than \$57 million. Governor Northam said Virginia will launch the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program next week, which will increase weekly payments by \$600. This program allows Virginia to provide unemployment benefits to those who didn't previously qualify (gig workers, self-employed, etc.). As a result of the increased claim



volumes, VEC is hiring more staff, hiring a private call center, and upgrading the website.

- **Budget/Legislative Update:** Governor Northam said that by tomorrow night, he will have acted on all of the legislation before him, complying with his April 11 deadline. When asked about the General Assembly reconvening, Governor Northam noted that the House will meet outdoors under a tent and the Senate will meet at the Science Museum to ensure social distancing requirements are maintained.

## April 8

On Wednesday, April 8, Governor Northam gave the following updates on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 3,645 cases of COVID-19.
- **PPE:** Virginia continues to distribute PPE, including masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer, and coveralls, to hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical facilities. No Virginia hospital has run out of PPE yet, but hospitals and health providers worry they don't have enough PPE. Virginia is preparing for all scenarios.
- **Elections:** Virginia has local and Congressional primary elections coming up in May and June, respectively. Governor Northam noted that voting is a fundamental right, but that no person should have to choose between their health and voting. Governor Northam said that holding in person elections right now would put the health of Virginians at risk. Therefore, Governor Northam is recommending that the May local elections be moved to November. This recommendation will require General Assembly action when they reconvene on April 22. Governor Northam is also moving the June 9 primary election to June 23. He noted that the governor has the authority to move primary elections back by two weeks, so this does not require General Assembly action.
- **Health Data:** Governor Northam has directed the Virginia Department of Health to track racial demographic data of confirmed cases. He said his administration is also exploring ways to ensure that private testing labs track racial demographic data as well.
- **Budget/Legislative Update:** Governor Northam said his administration has been reviewing the hundreds of bills passed by the General Assembly. He noted that he must sign, amend, or veto legislation before midnight on Saturday, April 11, and he will meet that deadline. Governor Northam said the budget cannot move forward as passed since Virginia is expecting a recession with a drastic reduction in revenues and large increases in spending to fight the pandemic. Governor Northam noted that he is working with budget leaders on amendments that will allow Virginia to deal with the changing revenue situation. The Governor stated that he will have another legislative update on Friday.
- **Restaurants:** Governor Northam directed the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to defer annual fees for licenses and permits that would be up for renewal through June. This affects about 6,000 establishments with ABC licenses. The governor also directed ABC that establishments with mixed beverage licenses will be allowed to sell mixed beverages through takeout or delivery effective midnight on Thursday, April 9.

## April 6

On Monday, April 6, 2020, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 2,878 cases of COVID-19.
- Governor Northam advised Virginians to wear a face covering in public per CDC guidelines.
- The Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is using genetic technology to help public health officials better understand COVID-19. One insight they have learned is that the virus was introduced in Virginia in multiple communities rather than spreading from one source. DCLS is one of the first public health labs in the nation to do this work. Governor Northam said DCLS's work will help give us more tools to fight COVID-19.
- Governor Northam said that build out on the 3 alternative care sites (Dulles Expo Center, Richmond Convention Center, and Hampton Roads Convention Center) will begin this week.
- Virginia has executed a \$27 million contract with Northfield, a Virginia-based logistics company, to provide PPE. The first shipment of PPE will arrive a week from today. Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran said this is just the first of many purchases of PPE.
- Virginia has also signed a contract with Estes Trucking to handle logistics and distribution.
- Virginia shipped 56K MREs (Meal, Ready-to-Eat) to food banks, which will supply the food banks for the next six weeks.
- VDH shipped the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of PPE to hospitals from the national stockpile.

### April 3

On Friday, April 3, Governor Northam made the following announcements related to Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 2,012 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia. The CDC noted this week that Virginia has widespread community transmission.
- Yesterday, the federal government approved Virginia's federal disaster declaration, which will provide additional federal funding for equipment and supplies. Additionally, it will help provide shelter for 1,500 homeless Virginians. FEMA is providing funding for food, cleaning supplies, and medical transportation.
- Governor Northam approved the Army Corps of Engineers's final recommendations for alternative care sites:
  - Dulles Expo Center, which can handle 315 acute or 510 non-acute beds (Governor Northam previously suggested that the ExxonMobil facility in Northern Virginia would be the alternative care site.)
  - Richmond Convention Center, which can accommodate 432 acute beds or 758 non-acute beds
  - Hampton Roads Convention Center, which can accommodate 360 acute beds or 580 non-acute beds.

The next steps are to complete contracts, design, and construction. The Governor expects the alternative care sites to be ready in about 6 weeks.

- This week, over 114K people applied for unemployment benefits. Virginia has expanded server capacity and call centers to help meet the demand.

- Governor Northam said the state is facing a recession, and it will have major impacts on the state budget. Governor Northam stated that “we can expect to have significantly less revenue than even our most pessimistic forecasts.” He noted that federal funding from the disaster declaration and the stimulus bills will help, but it won’t be enough. As a result, yesterday, Governor Northam directed state agency heads to eliminate discretionary spending for the remainder of the fiscal year and to prepare for budget cuts in the next budget cycle. Governor Northam also directed budget experts to reexamine funding that was planned for new initiatives and avoid any new commitments.
- Governor Northam said the state has developed additional guidance for faith communities, urging them to use alternative means of worship, such as virtual or drive-in gatherings.

## April 1

On Wednesday, April 1, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia’s response to COVID-19:

- There are currently 1,484 confirmed COVID-19 cases. There are 305 people hospitalized in Virginia due to COVID-19.
- Governor Northam said that models indicate that the surge in cases in Virginia will be in late April to late May.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer reviewed 41 sites and has identified 3 emergency hospital sites in Virginia:
  - ExxonMobil facility in Fairfax, which is next door to Inova Fairfax Hospital
  - Hampton Convention Center, which is near Sentara Hospital and Riverside Hospital
  - A site in the Richmond area, which will be announced on Friday
- Virginia received its 3<sup>rd</sup> shipment of PPE from the national stockpile, but Virginia still needs more PPE.
- Governor Northam noted that during the stay at home order, Virginia is scheduled to hold two elections - local elections in May and Congressional primaries in June. The Governor said voting is an essential right and the state is working through options on how to hold the elections. Governor Northam encouraged Virginians to use absentee voting in the meantime. Governor Northam said that elections are vitally important, and he will ensure that they are held.
- Governor Northam noted that April 1 is Census Day. He encouraged Virginians to complete the census as it determines how federal funding is distributed to states, which is more important than ever due to COVID-19.
- At the press conference on Friday, Governor Northam will announce guidelines and suggestions from Virginia’s faith leaders on religious services. Governor Northam suggested online or drive-in services.
- Governor Northam noted that he is looking at several pieces of legislation regarding Virginia’s business environment. He said he is seeking input from bill patrons and stakeholders and will make a decision that is in the best interest of Virginia and our economy.
- Two Virginia Department of Corrections facilities have been affected by the coronavirus. The Department of Corrections is following CDC guidelines at these facilities.



## March 30

On Monday, March 30, Governor Northam issued [Executive Order 55](#), a “stay at home” order. Importantly, [Executive Order 53](#), which Governor Northam signed last week, remains in effect.

Executive Order 55 orders Virginians to remain at their place of residence, except for the following purposes: grocery shopping, obtaining food or beverages, seeking medical attention or governmental services, seeking assistance from law enforcement, outdoor activities (provided it complies with social distancing requirements), taking care of individuals or visiting family, traveling for child visitation, traveling to work or places of worship, volunteering with charitable or social services organization, and leaving due to reasonable fear for health or safety.

The order also requires institutions of higher education to cease all in-person classes and instruction and cancel all gatherings of more than 10 individuals. The order also closes public beaches for all activity, except exercising and fishing, and privately-owned campgrounds for overnight stays of less than 14 nights. All indoor and outdoor gatherings of more than 10 individuals are prohibited.

Executive Order 55 is effective immediately and will remain in effect until June 10, 2020, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

At a press conference on Monday announcing the order, Governor Northam also gave the following updates on Virginia’s response to COVID-19:

- Virginia has 1,020 cases of COVID-19.
- Virginia continues to look for ways to increase hospital capacity. Virginia hospitals currently have a total of 18,500 beds (2,000 ICU beds). Virginia hospitals are identifying ways to increase capacity, and the Army Corps of Engineers are expected to have site recommendations for emergency hospitals in the coming days.
- Virginia has received USDA approval for the state’s household disaster feeding program so that the Virginia foodbank network can offer assistance to anyone in need of food, not just those that meet the income guidelines.

The next press conference is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1 at 2:00 PM.

## March 27

On Friday, March 27, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia’s response to COVID-19:

- As of today, there are 604 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Governor Northam emphasized that Virginians need to continue to social distance as it is the only way to slow the spread of the virus. He said Virginians need to stay home for the next few weeks at a minimum. The Governor reminded everyone that localities have full authority to enforce social distancing orders.
- Governor Northam said Virginia does not have enough PPE, but is actively working to get more. In the meantime, Governor Northam called for a national solution and called on President Trump to use the Defense Production Act to increase supplies.

- Governor Northam, Maryland Governor Hogan, and Washington, DC Mayor Bowser are also calling on President Trump to set up a federal testing site for the greater Washington region.
- The Governor thanked private businesses in Virginia that have donated PPE and asked for companies that wish to donate PPE to visit [www.virginia.gov/covid19](http://www.virginia.gov/covid19).
- Governor Northam noted that Virginia has made a request for funding for the Virginia National Guard. The Virginia National Guard is currently helping with logistics and delivering supplies, but stand ready to be called on for additional action.
- Virginia Finance Secretary Layne said Virginia will receive about \$3.3 billion from the federal stimulus package that Congress passed today.

## March 25

On Wednesday, March 25, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 391 positive cases in Virginia. Governor Northam said the numbers are a result of increased testing and community spread.
- Governor Northam gave an update on Virginia's healthcare capacity, including medical professionals, equipment, and beds.
  - Virginia is exploring ways to make it easier for qualified medical professionals to help during the pandemic, including reworking Virginia's licensing procedures and considering the use of medical students. Governor Northam said the state will make better use of the Virginia Medical Reserve Corps. The VMRC has more than 8,000 deployable volunteers. Governor Northam asked medical professionals that are licensed or students that are interested in volunteering to go to the VMRC website.
  - Governor Northam said he has encouraged medical providers to postpone elective surgeries. Today, Governor Northam will sign an executive order directing them to do so. Northam explained that this will preserve bed space and PPE.
  - Governor Northam said we need a national response due to price increases as states are competing for equipment.
  - To address bed capacity, Governor Northam spoke with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who can build emergency hospitals on sites that the state identifies for them should the need arise. Those sites will be announced when they are decided.
- Virginia state parks will be day-use only starting Friday morning. Campgrounds, cabins, and bath houses will close.
- The state is also working with the federal government to get additional federal dollars to families that qualify for SNAP benefits as a result of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act that Congress passed last week.
- Secretary Layne gave an overview of the \$2 trillion federal stimulus package that Congress will likely pass this week, and encouraged Congress to pass it quickly.
  - The package includes \$250 billion in direct payments to individuals, \$250 billion in enhanced unemployment benefits, \$130 billion for aid to hospitals, \$350 billion for loans and aid to small businesses, \$500 billion to large businesses, and \$150 billion in state and local aid.

- Governor Northam emphasized that residents need to stay home and encouraged Jerry Falwell to reconsider his message that invites students to return to Liberty University.

## March 24

On March 24, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are currently 290 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Virginia is working to ensure hospitals and medical providers have the equipment they need. Virginia received the first shipment of PPE from the national stockpile. Virginia has also ordered a shipment of PPE from a company overseas. Government officials are working with Virginia businesses to use their manufacturing lines to create PPE. Governor Northam commended the public and private sectors for being creative. For example, some Virginia distillers are making hand sanitizer, and the Department of Corrections is making masks. Virginia is also working to secure more ventilators.
- Governor Northam spoke with Maryland Gov. Hogan and Washington, D.C. Mayor Bowser on ways the region can work together and share medical equipment, such as ventilators.

Governor Northam announced that the press conferences will be held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 2:00PM moving forward.

## March 23

On March 23, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- There are 254 cases of COVID-19 in Virginia.
- Governor Northam signed [Executive Order 53](#), which orders the closure of certain non-essential businesses, bans all gatherings of more than 10 people, and closes all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year. The order goes into effect at 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 and will remain in place until 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 23, 2020.
- Governor Northam directed all schools – private and public – to remain closed for the remainder of the academic year. School divisions will decide how students will learn the information they were meant to cover for the remainder of the year. By tomorrow, the Department of Education will issue guidance to help school divisions plan and ensure that every student is served equitably. Governor Northam reiterated that Virginia is working on waivers for testing requirements.
- The Governor called for a public-private partnership to provide care for the children of essential workers. The Department of Education and the Department of Social Services will issue guidance today on how to provide childcare services for essential personnel.
- Under the Executive Order, recreation and entertainment businesses must close; dining and on-site alcohol establishments can continue to offer delivery and/or takeout

services; retail business can open but must adhere to social distancing requirements; professional businesses must utilize telework as much as possible.

- Last week, 40K people filed for unemployment in Virginia.

The press release of the Governor's announcement can be found [here](#). The text of Executive Order 53 can be found [here](#).

## March 22

On March 22, Governor Northam and his administration made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- Virginia has a total of 219 cases of COVID-19 as of today.
- VDEM shipped a major supply of PPE to emergency medical services, health districts, and hospitals yesterday.
- Virginia is actively reaching out to companies for help making and distributing PPE. Governor Northam called on Virginia companies with manufacturing, logistics and supply chain expertise to help.
- Governor Northam called for hospitals to reschedule elective surgeries. He said many hospitals have already done so.
- The Governor encouraged Virginians to telework and use telehealth services.
- The Department of Corrections is providing two free phone calls to inmates per week, since all in-person visitation has been suspended due to COVID-19. Transfers to prisons have also been suspended.
- Governor Northam said they will likely have additional guidance for schools tomorrow, March 23.

Governor Northam announced that he will move his daily press conference to 2 pm starting tomorrow.

## March 21

On March 21, Governor Northam made the following announcements on Virginia's COVID-19 response:

- Virginia's testing criteria will give additional priority to medical professionals that have cared for someone with COVID-19. They are also easing testing criteria for those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.
- Virginia is pursuing every opportunity to secure the necessary medical supplies. Secretary Carey said some manufacturers in Virginia may be able to make masks quickly, and Virginia is pursuing all options. Secretary Carey emphasized the need for a national solution as well.
- The Governor signed an executive order last night that will allow hospitals and nursing homes more flexibility to add beds during this situation. The order lifts the certificate of

public need restrictions so that our health commissioner can give hospitals and nursing homes the authority to add more beds without red tape.

- The Virginia Department of Education is preparing a waiver to exempt Virginia students from federal testing requirements, following the U.S. Department of Education's announcement that it will grant waivers to states.
- The Northam administration is also considering actions necessary to provide relief to students on state-mandated SOL tests.
- Attorney General Mark Herring issued an opinion that says that public bodies may conduct meetings electronically, if the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency.

## March 20

On March 20, Governor Northam held his daily press conference to provide updates on Virginia's COVID-19 response. As of today, there are 114 cases, 19 hospitalizations, and 2 deaths in Virginia. Virginia has more than 1,000 tests available as of today.

Governor Northam thanked businesses and restaurants that are abiding by the social distancing restrictions. He said for those restaurants and businesses that are not complying, localities have the authority to enforce the restrictions. He also said that Virginia ABC has granted restaurants the ability to sell beer and wine for takeout.

Yesterday, over 16K jobless claims came in. Dr. Megan Healy, Chief Workforce Development Officer, said the Virginia Employment Commission is increasing its capacity. It has expanded call centers and online server capacity. Additionally, the Governor has waived the waiting week and work search requirements to be considered for unemployment benefits. Dr. Healy said the Department of Labor is changing the rules daily on who can apply for unemployment benefits, so she encouraged everyone that has lost their job to apply.

Finally, Governor Northam encouraged all Virginians to complete their census form.

## March 19

Today, the Governor announced several actions in response to COVID-19:

- Businesses will be able to request an extension of February sales tax returns, which are due tomorrow, until April 20. Businesses will have to pay interest. This will cost the state \$145M and about \$30M will be felt by localities.
- While the tax filing deadline for individuals and corporations will remain the same, the payment deadline has been extended until June 1, 2020. Additional guidance on this as well as the sales tax returns extension will be posted on the tax commissioners website later this afternoon.



- The Governor directed the state police to suspend motor vehicle inspections for the next 60 days.
- As of yesterday, there are 10K unemployment claims in Virginia. The Governor said they are taking steps to ensure people don't have to wait a week to apply for unemployment.
- Virginia's application to the Small Business Administration to allow small businesses to apply for loans was approved.
- The Department of Corrections is suspending in-person meetings
- The Virginia Medicaid program is eliminating copays for services, extending prescription refills for 90 days, and enhancing telehealth options.

## Governor of Virginia – Executive Orders related to COVID-19

*Updated 4.13.2020*

- [State of Emergency declared](#)
- [Health Emergency Order Prohibiting More than 10 Patrons in Restaurants, Fitness Centers and Theaters](#)
- [Gov. Northam Announces Additional Actions to Address COVID-19](#)
- [Executive Order 52 Increases in Hospital Bed Capacity in Response to Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [Amended Order of the Governor and State Health Commissioner Declaration of Public Health Emergency](#)
- [Executive Order 53 Temporary Restrictions on Restaurants, Recreational, Entertainment, Gatherings, Non-essential Retail Businesses, and Closure of K-12 Schools Due to Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Order of Public Health Emergency Two](#)
- [Executive Order 54 Delegation of Authority to Commissioner of the Virginia Employment Commission](#)
- [Executive Order 55 Temporary Stay at Home Order Due to Novel Coronavirus](#)
- [Executive Directive Ten Authorizing the Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to Take Certain Administrative Action Due to the Novel Coronavirus](#)

## Virginia State Action on COVID-19

**April 10**

### [Northam Quietly Signs Hundreds of Bills As Deadline Looms](#)

Gov. Ralph Northam's thrice-weekly press conferences on the COVID-19 pandemic have become a grim fixture of Virginia political life. But behind closed doors, Northam has quietly continued a more traditional duty: reviewing and signing legislation. He's signed more than 800

pieces of legislation ranging from the symbolic, including a bill creating a “non-binary” gender option on driver’s license applications, to the obscure, such as a bill making it a misdemeanor to leave dead animals in churches.

### **Black Caucus urges Northam to sign wage increase despite pressure to hold off amid coronavirus crisis**

Members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus called on Gov. Ralph Northam to sign legislation that would raise the minimum wage, protect the environment and fight racial disparity even as the cost of the coronavirus crisis pressures him to hold off.

### **GOP weighs options for 7th District convention**

Under normal circumstances, Republican candidates across Virginia’s 7th Congressional District would be heading into the final stretch of campaigning in advance of their party’s April 25 convention, when delegates were scheduled to meet at the Arthur Ashe Center in Richmond and select a nominee for November’s general election. COVID-19 has turned that plan on its ear.

### **ACLU, others call for urgent prison and jail releases in response to COVID-19**

The ACLU of Virginia is calling for the quick release of any jail or prison inmate who does not pose “a demonstrable, imminent threat of bodily harm to others,” in light of the threat posed behind bars by COVID-19.

### **State extends ban on utility cut-offs into June**

The State Corporation Commission has extended an order barring utilities from cutting off electricity, natural gas, water or sewer service to non-paying customers during the coronavirus pandemic. The ban, which had been set to expire May 15, has been pushed back to June 14.

### **DMV turns shuttered weigh stations into rest areas for truckers**

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles announced Thursday that truckers may use weigh stations as rest areas. All 13 of the commonwealth’s weigh stations were closed until at least April 23, but an increasing number of commercial drivers are delivering food and supplies where needed as COVID-19 continues its grip on the nation.

### **HRT temporarily suspends fares**

Hampton Roads Transit says it plans to temporarily suspend all transit fares for HRT services effective Friday, April 10, 2020, according to a press release. The suspension will continue until June 10, 2020 unless modified or or stopped.

### **Area colleges and universities to receive more than \$20 million in emergency grant funds**

More than \$6 billion will be distributed immediately to colleges and universities nationwide to provide grants to college students whose lives and educations have been disrupted by the

coronavirus outbreak, according to a press release from the U.S. Department of Education. Area colleges and universities will see more than \$20 million in emergency funding. Three local colleges and universities will see more than \$1 million in funds: Liberty University's total allocation is more than \$15 million, University of Lynchburg will receive more than \$1.9 million and Central Virginia Community College will receive more than \$1.8 million.

#### **Virginia medical providers want liability protections during the COVID-19 pandemic**

A group of 19 Virginia medical associations sent a letter to Gov. Ralph Northam on Tuesday, requesting legal protections for their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter, signed by such major industry players as the Medical Society of Virginia and Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, includes a draft executive order and calls on Northam to declare "civil and criminal immunity to health care providers that act in good faith" while responding to the ongoing crisis.

#### **Farm to table, via driver's window: Drive-thru farmers' market to open**

On most weekends, a trip to the farmers market includes a leisurely stroll among vendors, sampling a just-picked-and-sliced apple or skewering a tiny piece of cheese with a toothpick, and going home with bags of fresh produce grown on local farms. But when a popular farmers market opens April 18 in Fauquier County, Virginia, business that's normally conducted in a large parking lot on Fifth Street, in historic Warrenton, will be adapted to a drive-thru market, including a series of three parking lots along Main Street.

### **April 9**

#### **Nation's only doctor governor offers sober voice on virus**

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam and his top aides were having a meeting about the coronavirus when the discussion turned to neckties. The governor said he had read a study in a medical journal showing that ties worn by doctors at hospitals can host harmful germs and help spread disease. So Northam issued an informal edict to his staff: Keep the ties in the closet until further notice.

#### **Governor: Elections scheduled for this spring won't proceed as planned**

Virginia elections scheduled for this spring won't proceed as planned, Gov. Ralph Northam said Wednesday. Local elections set for next month will be pushed to November, pending action from the General Assembly, Northam said. He is also pushing the June Congressional primaries back two weeks, from June 9 to June 23.

#### **Northam recommends moving municipal elections to November**

Gov. Ralph Northam announced Wednesday that he is recommending postponing the May 5 municipal elections to November and delaying the June 9 congressional primaries by two weeks out of a concern about people voting in person during the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Virginia launches educational 'VA TV Classroom' teacher-led instruction**

In Virginia, four public media television stations will soon air classroom instruction in response to social distancing and schools closing for the remainder of the academic year, according to a statement released on Wednesday. . . . The Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane announced that the Department of Education has partnered with Blue Ridge PBS, VPM, WETA and WHRO Public Media to make this possible.

### **Va. to allow takeout, delivery cocktails**

Gov. Ralph Northam has directed the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to allow businesses with mixed-beverage licenses, such as restaurants and distilleries, to sell mixed drinks on a takeout and delivery basis. The directive, announced Wednesday, goes into effect Friday.

**April 8**

### **Governor Northam Announces Plans to Postpone Upcoming Virginia Elections in Response to COVID-19**

Governor Ralph Northam today requested the General Assembly move the May General Election and all special elections scheduled for May 5, 2020 to the November 3, 2020 General Election date to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Governor is also exercising his statutory authority (§ 24.2-603.1 of the Code of Virginia) to move the June primary elections from June 9, 2020 to June 23, 2020.

### **Governor Northam Announces Additional Actions Providing Relief for Restaurants and Distilleries Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic**

Governor Ralph Northam today issued an executive directive authorizing the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (ABC) to defer annual fees for licenses and permits that would be up for renewal through June. The Governor also directed the Virginia ABC to allow establishments with mixed beverage licenses, such as restaurants and distilleries, to sell mixed beverages through takeout or delivery, effective at midnight Thursday.

### **Virginia Attorney General asks state to extend suspension of utility disconnection through June 10**

Attorney General Mark Herring has asked the State Corporation Commission to extend its mandated suspension of utility disconnections for non-payment and suspended late charges through June 10.

### **Northam to postpone action on teacher raises, tuition freeze**

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam plans to delay some long-sought Democratic priorities until more is known about the pandemic's affect on the economy, pushing back decisions on whether to give

teachers and state workers raises, freeze in-state college tuition, and implement other new spending in budget recently passed by lawmakers. Clark Mercer, the governor's chief of staff, said Tuesday that too little is known about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

#### **Virginia Senate plans to convene at Science Museum conference hall during April veto session**

To protect members and staff from COVID-19, the Virginia Senate will trade its clubby confines at the state Capitol for an airy conference hall at the Science Museum of Virginia when the legislature returns to Richmond for its spring session April 22. Unlike the House of Delegates, which announced last week it would convene outdoors, possibly on the Capitol grounds, the Senate will meet indoors.

#### **Virginia schools will be able to keep millions in federal money**

Virginia schools will now be able to keep millions in federal education money they would have had to give back with schools closed for the rest of the academic year. The change was granted under flexibility given to the state by the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **Virginia Dems in Congress ask Trump for flexibility on relief money for state and local governments**

Virginia Democrats in Congress have asked President Donald Trump's administration for guidance to state and local governments that gives them more flexibility in spending an estimated \$3.3 billion in emergency relief from the stimulus package signed into law in late March.

#### **Amid widespread closures, clinics and health providers turn to telehealth**

With state and federal regulations and recommendations against continuing routine checkups and elective surgeries, health practitioners are closing their doors — but some are offering different telehealth options to keep up with patients during the pandemic.

#### **State Psychiatric Hospitals Work to Contain Coronavirus**

State psychiatric hospitals are starting to see cases of COVID-19. As of Tuesday, these include one confirmed staff case at Central State Hospital in Petersburg, and one resident case at the Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation about an hour from Richmond in Burkeville, Virginia. There's also one confirmed staff case at Western State Hospital in Staunton and two staff cases at Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Marion.

**April 7**

#### **Governor to call 'timeout' on budget, suspend all new spending**



Gov. Ralph Northam will suspend all new spending in the pending two-year, \$135 billion state budget and divert planned deposits in the state's reserves to pay for essential services in the public health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

**Virginia to get more protective medical gear via \$27 million deal with a private supplier**

Gov. Ralph Northam announced Monday that the state has reached a \$27 million deal with the medical logistics company Northfield as part of an effort to relieve what he described as a "severe shortage" of personal protective equipment in Virginia and across the country. . . . Monday marked the first time Virginia officials provided details on their efforts to supply more protective equipment since the state's first confirmed case of COVID-19, the disease caused by a new coronavirus, on March 7.

**Northam recommends wearing masks to help prevent coronavirus spread**

Following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, Gov. Ralph Northam urged people to wear masks when leaving the house to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. At a press conference in Richmond Monday, Northam said wearing a mask doesn't mean social distancing measures can be relaxed. "No one should assume that if they wear a face covering, they are safe and can go about their business as usual," he said.

**Booze delivered: Virginia ABC to allow distilleries to ship directly to consumers**

The Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority is now allowing distilleries to ship spirits directly to in-state consumers. The temporary change is an effort to help distilleries suffering from financial hardship during the coronavirus pandemic. This change applies only the distilleries that have existing agreements with ABC to produce and sell their products at their site.

**April 6**

**Virginia Uses Genetic Technology to Combat COVID-19, State public health laboratory is one of the first in the nation to do this work**

Governor Ralph Northam today announced that the Department of General Services' (DGS) Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) is one of the first public health labs in the nation to use genetic technology to help public health officials better understand and track the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

**Northam orders hiring freeze, agency heads to look for cuts**

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam is instituting a hiring freeze of state employees and is telling agency heads to look for ways to cut budgets in response to the coronavirus. Northam chief of staff Clark Mercer told agency heads in a Thursday memo obtained by The Associated Press that a recession is coming and the state revenues will be far below "even our most pessimistic forecast" from last year.

**Democrats' call for vote-by-mail grows; ACLU warns against closing polls**

A push to expand vote-by-mail in Virginia amid COVID-19 is gaining momentum among Democratic lawmakers and state election officials, but how far the changes should go is a source of debate. A growing coalition of Democratic lawmakers is advocating universal vote-by-mail in which virtually all voters would cast ballots from home in the May 5 municipal elections and June 9 primary elections.

**State taps Greater Richmond Convention Center, two other sites, to become field hospitals**

The Greater Richmond Convention Center is among three venues Gov. Ralph Northam on Friday announced as sites for field hospitals that would bring more than 1,800 hospital beds online as the state braces for a surge in COVID-19 patients. Northam tapped the Dulles Expo Center in Northern Virginia and the Hampton Roads Convention Center in addition to the Richmond site.

**Dulles Expo Center selected as alternate care hospital site in northern Virginia** Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) on Friday announced that the Dulles Expo Center in Fairfax County has been selected as an alternate care facility that may hold approximately 315 acute or 500 non-acute beds. Construction of the alternate care site is expected to take around six weeks. The governor said the site is intended to free up capacity at existing hospitals during the coronavirus pandemic.

**Virginia House planning to convene outdoors for veto session, Speaker says**

The Virginia House of Delegates will reconvene for a scheduled veto session on April 22 despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but when it does, it will likely be outdoors, House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn said in an interview with the Richmond Times-Dispatch on Friday.

**Virginia Board of Education clears hurdles for high school seniors to graduate this spring**

There's good news out of Richmond for high school seniors: The Virginia Board of Education approved two emergency measures on Thursday to waive temporarily certain rules that would otherwise prevent students from earning high school credits for courses interrupted by the extended school closures. These actions give Virginia school districts additional leeway to allow the class of 2020 to graduate on time and younger students to advance to the next grade.

**March 25**

**GOP candidate sues Virginia election officials, says coronavirus thwarted efforts to get ballot signatures**

A candidate seeking the Republican nomination to run against U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D) has filed a lawsuit against Virginia election officials that argues the COVID-19 pandemic has made it too difficult to gather the petition signatures necessary to qualify for the June primary ballot. Omari Faulkner, a Navy reservist and former Georgetown University basketball player, filed the suit in the Richmond Circuit Court this week.

### **Northam splits with Trump on timeframe for recovery**

Gov. Ralph Northam on Tuesday batted down a suggestion from President Donald Trump that the nation's economy could be "open by Easter." Hours later, the Richmond area reported its first two coronavirus deaths, pushing Virginia's statewide toll to at least nine. "While it would be nice to say that this will be behind us in two weeks, that's really not what the data tells us," Northam said in a briefing with reporters.

### **Virginia offers flexibility so high school seniors can still graduate**

Guidance from the Virginia Department of Education released after Gov. Ralph Northam ordered state schools to be closed for the rest of the school year provides leniency so members of the senior class can still graduate.

### **Courts are scrambling to address coronavirus**

Courts across Virginia have been forced to rapidly escalate their planning and communication processes over the past two weeks in an effort to avoid public gatherings and therefore to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

### **Virginia ABC stores to cut operating hours effective Friday**

Virginia ABC stores will open late and close early for a deep cleaning in response to the spread of coronavirus.

## **March 24**

### **Northam cancels school year, orders some businesses closed**

Virginia public schools will remain closed for the rest of the current school year and certain types of businesses, like bowling alleys, salons, gyms and theaters, must close in response to the coronavirus outbreak, Gov. Ralph Northam said Monday.

### **Virginia may take \$1 billion annual revenue hit in new budget**

Virginia's top finance official says the state is likely to lose \$1 billion in revenue in each year of the pending two-year budget — and that's the best scenario, assuming significant aid from the federal government for workers and business owners who have lost their livelihoods because of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Governors Clamp Down as Trump Considers Easing Virus Plans**

Governors and mayors across the U.S. issued orders to shut down normal human contact and commercial life even as the Trump administration debates dialing back guidance that officials fear is smothering the economy.

#### **Staggered schedules, moving desks: How 109,000 state employees are working during coronavirus**

While Gov. Ralph Northam is banning groups of more than 10 people from gathering, and encouraging people to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic, more than 109,000 state employees are getting creative with their workspaces.

#### **Northam orders some businesses to close as state's COVID-19 death toll reaches 7**

Gov. Ralph Northam on Monday ordered bowling alleys, theaters, barber shops, gyms and spas to close in order to help slow the spread of the coronavirus that has so far killed seven Virginians and hospitalized at least 38.

#### **A list of essential and nonessential businesses in Virginia, according to the governor**

The following recreation and entertainment businesses are considered nonessential and must close to the public beginning at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, according to Gov. Ralph Northam: theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues, museums and other indoor entertainment centers.

#### **Virginia K-12 schools closed for remainder of academic year**

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam on Monday ordered the state's K-12 schools to remain closed for the rest of the school year. "School closures are necessary to minimize the speed at which COVID-19 spreads and protect the capacity of our health care system," he said.

### **March 23**

#### **Virginia Governor Issues Executive Order Addressing Schools, Businesses, and Large Gatherings**

Executive Order 53 closes K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year, bans gatherings of 10 or more, and creates temporary business restrictions.

#### **Northam: Prepare for coronavirus outbreak to last months**

As health officials reported 67 new coronavirus cases in Virginia — bringing the total to 219, the biggest jump yet

#### **As Va. jobless claims soar, economists expect hit to state's economy**

Solid economic data is hard to come by so far about the severity and extent of damage to Virginia's economy from the coronavirus outbreak, but anecdotal reports coming to economists

at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond do indicate a sudden and major hit to employment especially for businesses such as restaurants and hotels.

**[Va. attorney general: Local governments must continue to meet in person during outbreak](#)**

Local governments scrambling to conduct board and council meetings while respecting social distancing and coronavirus safety concerns were provided little leeway by an opinion on the matter from Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring.

**[Region's legislators credit Northam for crisis response, see budget adjustments coming](#)**

Members of the General Assembly delegation for the Roanoke and New River valleys credit Gov. Ralph Northam for his coronavirus outbreak response, but remain unsure about how to balance protecting public health with keeping businesses afloat.

**[Virginia ABC allowing all restaurants with on-premises licenses to sell wine and beer to go](#)**

Any restaurant in Virginia with a valid license to sell wine and beer on-premises can now sell wine and beer to go and for delivery without applying for additional permits.

**[Virginia will cancel SOLs this year because of the coronavirus](#)**

Virginia students and teachers won't have to worry about Standards of Learning tests this spring.

**[Virginia's retirement plan for teachers and government workers says it is weathering market turmoil](#)**

Financial markets are in turmoil, but the retirement plan that covers Virginia teachers, state employees and most local government staff has just completed processing the payments to retirees it will be sending out April 1.

**March 20**

**[Virginia small businesses eligible to apply for coronavirus disaster loans](#)**

Virginia small businesses are now eligible to apply for financial assistance due to the impact of the spreading coronavirus.

**[Governor faces calls for special session, 'bolder and swifter action' on COVID-19](#)**

After adjourning a historic legislative session last week, a few Democratic lawmakers crossed Capitol Square to stand with Gov. Ralph Northam at a news conference about the state's response to COVID-19. Then they left town and went home to their districts. Then the world changed.



**DEQ suspends routine fieldwork but will continue pipeline monitoring through contractors**

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has suspended all routine fieldwork, including regular inspections and in-person monitoring, for two weeks in the face of the continuing spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus.

**March 19**

**Governor Northam Announces Additional Actions to Address COVID-19**

Co-pays eliminated for all Medicaid-covered services, tax relief, small businesses can begin applying for low-interest federal disaster loans

**Virginia to extend May 1 tax deadline for all individuals and businesses**

Virginia will allow all individuals and businesses to delay paying their 2019 income taxes by 30 days, bumping the deadline to pay from May 1 to June 1

**Insurers waiving testing, telemedicine fees**

Virginia health insurers say members who need screening and testing to see if they are infected with the COVID-19 coronavirus won't be asked for the usual co-pay or other cost-sharing

**Unemployment Benefits for Workers Impacted by Coronavirus in DC, Maryland, Virginia**

Workers are facing financial hardship as businesses either shut down or reduce their hours over the coronavirus

**VDOE seeks federal SOL testing waiver during coronavirus crisis**

Amid statewide school closures due to the threat of coronavirus, the Virginia Department of Education has requested a federal waiver for students slated to take the Virginia Standards of Learning tests this spring

**In letter to Northam, Fairfax offers suggestions to help fight coronavirus**

Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax sent a letter to Gov. Ralph Northam voicing his opinion on what steps the state should implement during the coronavirus pandemic

**Virginia officials asking law enforcement to avoid arrests when possible**

Virginia state officials are asking law enforcement agencies to avoid arrests when possible, amid calls from civil rights groups about jail conditions amid the COVID-19 outbreak

**Virginia GOP Delays Convention to Pick Trump as Nominee; The Republican Party of Virginia has postponed its upcoming statewide convention due to the coronavirus**

The Republican Party of Virginia has postponed its upcoming statewide convention due to the coronavirus.

**DMV shopping malls shut down amid coronavirus concerns**

Simon Properties and Westfield stores have temporarily closed stores in Maryland and Virginia

**March 18**

**Clearer picture arrives of economic toll of coronavirus**

The economic toll of the coronavirus pandemic became clearer Tuesday as layoffs and furloughs in the hospitality and service industries continue to mount in Greater Washington

**State allocates additional \$11M to struggling transit systems**

Commonwealth Transportation Board funds are aimed at helping transit agencies recover from ridership losses and other COVID-19-related operating expenses

**Universities, colleges cancel graduation ceremonies amid pandemic**

Public, private and community colleges have canceled commencement

**Pentagon wants USNS Comfort ready to deploy to New York**

The Defense Department wants the Norfolk-based hospital ship USNS Comfort to get ready to deploy to New York in an effort to aid civilian hospitals that may need to relocate patients who aren't diagnosed with coronavirus

**March 17**

**Governor Northam Announces New Measures to Combat COVID-19 and Support Impacted Virginians**

Directs adherence to 10-person gathering ban, quarantine for high-risk individuals, worker and employer support

**Governor Northam Declares Public Health Emergency**

**March 12**

**Governor Northam Declares State of Emergency, Outlines Additional Measures to Combat COVID-19**

Governor issues guidance on large events and state workforce, activates long-term economic plan

**Virginia Local Action on COVID-19**

**April 10**

**Fairfax County considers early release of jail inmates during pandemic**

Fairfax County, Virginia's top prosecutor took a bold step toward reviewing who needs to be in the county's jail in hopes of reducing the number of people confined in a space that could easily become a breeding ground for the novel coronavirus. Along with limiting the defendants coming into the system, Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said his office will review the case of every individual serving a sentence in jail on a case-by-case basis to determine if they are eligible for early release.

**Richmond Council approves virtual meetings in response to COVID-19**

The Richmond City Council will cease in-person public hearings and hold electronic meetings about business it deems critical through the COVID-19 pandemic. The council approved new guidelines at a special meeting Thursday so the city's public bodies can continue meeting during the state of emergency.

**County cuts proposed budget by \$50 million**

A planned November 2020 bond referendum is being put on hold, and several other capital projects have been delayed indefinitely as the Chesterfield County government marshals resources to fund operations in the face of a nationwide economic crisis fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Hampton launches small business loan program, extensions on tax bills to those affected by coronavirus**

For those hit hardest by the pandemic, Hampton is offering some people more time to pay their tax bills and a loan forgiveness program for small businesses. The Hampton City Council — voting unanimously during an electronic meeting Wednesday night — approved a loan and grant forgiveness program that will be managed by the Economic Development Authority, City Manager Mary Bunting said.

**Williamsburg City Council addresses budget in light of the coronavirus**

Along with the economic downturn brought about the coronavirus pandemic, local governments are finding themselves re-evaluating budgets as they continue to provide vital services to their residents. Take Williamsburg for instance. Despite creating a strong budget in January, the Williamsburg City Council finds itself reassessing its financial strategy for the end of 2020 and the entirety of 2021 to accommodate changes to the economy as a result of the coronavirus.

**Closures raise concerns for Northumberland**

While some counties are doing all right with recent state closures aimed to fight COVID-19, these closures have pretty much shut down Northumberland County. The school year is

canceled, the courts are closed and public offices are closed to the public. Churches have canceled services and activities and public events have been called off.

## April 9

### [Local governments in D.C. region revise budgets, halt projects](#)

Alexandria officials have begun placing long-awaited projects such as a new Waterfront Park on hold. The D.C. government has frozen hiring and will forgo salary increases. And in Montgomery County, a proposal for a supplemental property tax increase is dead. The financial impact of the shutdown of businesses and organizations caused by the coronavirus pandemic is quickly coming into view.

### [Supervisor asks DOJ to investigate Riverside jail](#)

A member of the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors is asking the U.S. Department of Justice to initiate a civil rights investigation of Riverside Regional Jail. In a letter to Eric S. Dreiband, an assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's civil rights division, Clover Hill District Supervisor Chris Winslow alleges "pervasive, open and egregious" violations of the civil rights of men and women incarcerated at the regional jail in Prince George County.

### [Local banks take 'all-hands-on-deck' approach to loan volume](#)

As small businesses nationwide are applying for financial assistance during the coronavirus pandemic, local banks are working to stay abreast of guidelines and process applications quickly. Open season for loan applications through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act — dubbed the CARES Act — along with the Paycheck Protection Program, was declared Friday. Business owners have flocked to their lending agents to find relief.

### [Virginia Breeze bus to suspend service between Blacksburg and Washington](#)

The Virginia Breeze announced plans to suspend bus service Friday between Blacksburg and Union Station in Washington because not enough riders are traveling during the virus emergency.

### [Shenandoah National Park is now closed at the request of the state Department of Health](#)

Shenandoah National Park was closed Wednesday and going forward by the National Park Service following a request from the Rappahannock Rapidan Health District of the Virginia Department of Health.

### [Deliberately coughing on someone now a crime in Virginia Beach](#)

No one wants to be coughed on deliberately. But as the coronavirus pandemic swept around the globe the past several weeks, people started viewing such actions as potentially deadly. And in Virginia Beach and other locales, they are now considering it to be criminal, too.

### **Alexandria faces \$100M budget gap because of coronavirus pandemic**

The City of Alexandria is feeling a budget crunch from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, leaving officials in the Virginia city with no choice but to revise down their funding plan for the next fiscal year. Alexandria City Manager Mark Jinks announced revisions to his proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget in response to a \$100 million gap amid the fallout to the coronavirus crisis.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Drives Major Fairfax County Budget Changes**

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill is pitching major revisions to his budget proposal for fiscal year 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised budget eliminates a proposed three-cent tax rate increase and fee increases across-the-board in order to relieve pressure on the county's taxpayers. Hill's proposal also shifts spending to essential services only and removes all salary increases.

### **Loudoun County supervisors approve \$3B annual budget, plan to freeze \$100M due to coronavirus uncertainty**

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday adopted a fiscal 2021 budget that reduces the tax rate one cent. The effect of the new budget on county homeowners remains uncertain given COVID-19's impact on the local economy. The county plans to freeze \$100 million as a result of COVID-19.

### **Richmond City Council To Vote On Virtual Meetings During COVID-19 Pandemic**

On Thursday afternoon, Richmond City Council will vote on new rules that would allow it to hold virtual rather than in-person meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. City council has had to cancel many of its meetings over the last few weeks, following Gov. Ralph Northam's executive order limiting public gatherings to 10 people or less. Richmond City Council's new rules would require three days of public notice before a meeting and that it be live streamed online through its Legistar service.

### **Trash collection in Williamsburg is being done differently to protect employees from the coronavirus**

The city of Williamsburg's Public Works Department has changed how garbage is collected to protect its employees. Garbage truck drivers have started not manually picking up items outside of a resident's cart. City spokeswoman LeeAnn Hartmann said typically, residents will place bags of debris and trash next to their garbage carts when they overflow and it causes truck drivers to have to get out of the vehicle and manually collect the extra bags.

### **Gloucester seeks help to boost broadband access as coronavirus demand for online service climbs**

With Virginia students doing schoolwork at home, and hordes of adults trying to work from home, Gloucester County is putting out a call to businesses to open access to their wi-fi



connections to county residents. The county itself is offering free, if limited, wi-fi access in the parking lots of the main library and its Point branch in Hayes.

#### **Spotsylvania school officials work to expand internet access**

Spotsylvania County Public Schools has made internet hotspots available for students who cannot access the internet at home. The division is also making computers available to students who do not have them.

**April 8**

#### **Farm stands across Hampton Roads open early to sell fruits and veggies**

John Cromwell's farm stand in Virginia Beach usually opens in mid-May, when his fields are bursting with pea pods. Until then, he's busy supplying local restaurants with his hardy winter crops — beets, kale and collards. But with eateries across the country cutting back or closing entirely as a result of the coronavirus, Cromwell found himself last month with plenty of ripe vegetables and no where to sell them.

#### **Arlington Democrats go mail-in route for School Board caucus**

The Arlington County Democratic Committee is switching to a mail-in election to select two endorsees for School Board, with results expected to be released in early June. The new process, devised in the wake of the COVID-19 public-health crisis, replaces the traditional Democratic caucus, which usually includes two or three days of in-person voting.

#### **Virginia Beach City Council votes to suspend meal taxes to reduce takeout bills**

Starting in May, anyone ordering takeout from a Virginia Beach restaurant will see a 5.5% decrease on the bill. During its second virtual meeting since the coronavirus pandemic began, the Virginia Beach City Council voted 9-2 on Tuesday evening to suspend the meals tax for May and June in an effort to encourage more people to support local businesses.

#### **Peninsula localities adjust as they face unknowns with budget season approaching**

For Peninsula localities and their budget cycles, the coronavirus pandemic has created a new level of unknown. City councils, county boards of supervisors and school boards must complete their spending plans in time for the July 1 start of their next fiscal year. Whether the virus and the hefty economic cost it imposes on some communities will be over by then is far from certain.

#### **Chesapeake sheriff wants to use temporary building to house inmates in Hampton Roads**

A temporary building at the Chesapeake city jail could be used to house inmates in the region who test positive for coronavirus. Chesapeake Sheriff Jim O'Sullivan has asked the state Board of Corrections for permission to use the building, which is vacant, to isolate sick inmates from the general population.

### [Roanoke to furlough some city workers](#)

Roanoke City Manager Bob Cowell says that he and his staff are working on next year's budget while picking up the pieces of this year's. The Great Recession found Roanoke City Manager Bob Cowell halfway across the country. Cowell was director of planning and development services in College Station, Texas, and he was part of a team that had to implement furloughs during the 2008-2009 period.

April 7

### [Frederick County EDA takes steps to help businesses hit by virus](#)

As the COVID-19 pandemic forces many businesses to temporarily close to prevent the spread of the virus, the Frederick County Economic Development Authority is ramping up efforts to help local businesses stay afloat. According to EDA Executive Director Patrick Barker, the EDA is trying to be a source of information about the coronavirus situation and its impact on the economy.

### [Forest Service, towns announce temporary closure of Virginia Creeper Trail](#)

The Virginia Creeper Trail will be temporarily closed starting today at 5 p.m. in an effort to protect the public from COVID-19. The decision was made jointly by the US Forest Service and the towns of Abingdon and Damascus, according to a news release. "Recent overcrowding along portions of the trail, concern for increasing the burden on local Emergency Medical Services and the health and safety of all trail users were the driving forces behind this decision," Matthew Crum, president of the Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy stated in the release.

### [Arlington Democrats evaluating options for School Board caucus](#)

The Arlington County Democratic Committee is formulating options to carry through with its School Board caucus in the wake of public-health concerns. . . . Democrats had planned two days of caucus voting at county schools in May, but it appears increasingly unlikely that will take place. Because the caucus is not a state-run political event, Democrats have a significant amount of leeway in setting up (and amending) procedures.

### [Hampton council to hold virtual public meeting](#)

Hampton City Council will host a virtual public meeting Wednesday. The council's public meetings scheduled for next week at city hall have been canceled due to coronavirus concerns. Instead, it will hold a meeting electronically at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. Some members of council are expected to attend electronically.

### [Stafford supervisors seek virtual public comment at budget hearing](#)

Stafford County supervisors have decided not to let residents offer on-site comments at a public hearing Tuesday on the proposed fiscal 2021 budget because of concerns about the

coronavirus. Instead, residents can submit comments by completing an online form, which will remain open until April 21. All submissions received will be read into the public record.

#### **City Council to vote on virtual meetings, tax relief**

Fredericksburg's City Council will hold a special virtual meeting at 4 p.m. Tuesday to vote on several issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be broadcast on Cox Channel 84 and Verizon Channel 42. Public comments can be posted on Facebook Live during the meeting, but won't be answered until the following day.

#### **Roanoke City Council likely to give taxpayers extra time**

Roanoke City Council is moving toward offering taxpayers short-term relief from coronavirus-driven economic hardships via deadline extensions and waiving late penalties. During Monday's electronic council meeting, proposals to waive late fees for real estate taxes — due Monday — for 30 days and to extend the personal property by a month, to June 30, received broad support.

#### **Danville Public Works implements new guidelines to protect workers**

To reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus, Danville's Public Works Department is implementing new measures for residents to follow to protect the city's sanitation workers. Rick Drazenovich, the director of public works, said residents are generating up to 20% more household garbage since the state's stay-at-home order was issued in March.

### **April 6**

#### **Park service closes section of Appalachian Trail including McAfee Knob**

The National Park Service has closed 27 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus at the center of a worldwide outbreak that has sickened more than a million people and killed more than 65,000.

#### **City of Alexandria could face nearly \$100 million budget shortfall**

The City of Alexandria, Virginia, stands to lose nearly \$100 million through mid-2021 as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Under new budget proposals, the city is considering hiring freezes at the city government level and deferring city projects and employee compensation increases, it said.

#### **Herndon Officials Rethink FY 2021 Budget Due to Economic Changes**

As the U.S. experiences an economic downturn as a result of COVID19, Town of Herndon officials plan to revise the previously proposed budget for fiscal year 2021. Herndon Town Manager William Ashton II recently decided that the budget is no longer fitting for the town's needs, according to a press release.

#### **Chesterfield County cuts \$50 million from upcoming budget, salary increases canceled**

As localities continue to grapple with estimating the full economic blow of COVID-19, Chesterfield County released its revised budget Friday afternoon, and it's almost \$50 million short of County Administrator Joe Casey's initial \$773 million budget proposal and \$10 million below the 2020 adopted budget.

#### **Virginia Beach has started offering hotel rooms to homeless people to fight the spread of the coronavirus**

Over the past two weeks, Virginia Beach has quietly offered 46 hotel rooms to homeless individuals, in the hopes that getting them off the streets would help prevent the spread of coronavirus. To the city's surprise, Gov. Ralph Northam endorsed the idea on Friday — announcing \$2.5 million in emergency funding for localities across the state to provide temporary housing for about 1,500 people without shelter. Virginia Beach expects to receive more than \$124,000 from the state and possibly more from the federal government to help the homeless.

#### **Possibly delaying the new high school by a year hints at the city's tough financial decisions to come**

Harrisonburg leaders are looking at a starkly different financial reality now than they were less than four months ago when the city council approved the \$100 million needed to build and open a second high school, which has the Harrisonburg School Board considering a one-year delay of its construction. The school board will hold a closed session Thursday to discuss with the board's attorney Kevin Rose the ramifications of altering the construction contract.

#### **Roanoke Valley police, DMV make adjustments**

The first day of April last week also brought with it the possibility of a missed deadline for some Virginia drivers — anyone whose vehicle's state inspection stickers expired at the end of March. Depending on the circumstances, however, windshields still bearing a 3/20 might not necessarily prompt a traffic stop.

#### **Montgomery County closes government center after second worker gets initial positive COVID-19 test**

Montgomery County is closing its government center for two weeks after two workers tested positive for COVID-19, the county announced Saturday, the same day the county vaulted from one to six total reported cases. Many core government functions, such as public safety and others that operate from separate facilities, will continue, county spokeswoman Jennifer Harris said Saturday.

#### **Washington County, Va., elections office closes**

The elections office is now closed in Washington County, Virginia, due to a recent announcement by the Mount Rogers Health District that community transmission of coronavirus is now occurring.

## April 2

### [Richmond Economic Development Authority Creates Small Business Loan Program](#)

## March 25

### [Lynchburg mayor denounces move to reopen Liberty as 'reckless'](#)

With the threat of the coronavirus looming, Lynchburg Mayor Treney Tweedy sharply criticized Liberty University President Jerry Falwell Jr.'s decision to invite students back to campus, calling the move reckless and unfortunate.

## March 24

### [Arlington Grapples with Community Transmission of Coronavirus](#)

Like other nearby localities, Arlington has entered the community transmission phase of coronavirus outbreak.

### [Athletic Fields, Dog Parks, Playgrounds Closing in Arlington](#)

All Arlington dog parks, fields and playgrounds are closing in an effort to stop the spread of coronavirus.

### [Dan River Region leaders react to executive order to close businesses](#)

Many of the area businesses that had managed to remain open during the past few weeks now will be forced to close for at least a month as a result of Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's executive order.

## March 23

### [Fairfax County COVID-19 Update](#)

Fairfax County is still proceeding with development reviews, inspections and permitting, albeit with adjusted procedures. For zoning cases, the Department of Planning and Development is primarily working remotely and has adjusted to receiving electronic resubmissions.

### [Alexandria closes outdoor spaces due to coronavirus](#)

Playgrounds, recreation centers and other outdoor areas have been shut down by the City of Alexandria in order to slow the spread of coronavirus, the city announced Saturday afternoon. The closures, announced in conjunction with Alexandria City Public Schools, target basketball and tennis courts, fenced-in fields and dog parks.

### [Arlington County Rethinks FY2021 Budget Due To Coronavirus](#)

Arlington County Board Chair Libby Garvey called the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Proposal County Manager Mark Schwartz submitted in February "no longer very relevant" in light of the current coronavirus crisis

## March 19

### [F.C. Declares Local Emergency in Response to Coronavirus](#)

Falls Church City Manager Wyatt Shields, in an exclusive interview with the News-Press Wednesday afternoon, confirmed that the City and City schools are in full-scale mobilization to adhere with "social distancing" and other key elements aimed at stemming the spread of the deadly airborne coronavirus.

### [LewisGale implements stricter policies as coronavirus cases in Virginia reach 77](#)

LewisGale Regional Health System is implementing new procedures as cases of the novel coronavirus continue to increase throughout Virginia

### [Colonial Downs announces all Rosie's Gaming Emporiums will close temporarily amid coronavirus](#)

### [Richmond-area police departments prepare to enforce 10-person limit, while keeping eye on crime during pandemic](#)

The Richmond and Chesterfield County police departments are giving targeted businesses a grace period to comply with Gov. Ralph Northam's order limiting gatherings larger than 10 people.

### [Arlington Officials Scramble to Rethink Budget, Urge Additional Action from State](#)

While reducing the human toll of the coronavirus outbreak is a top priority, Arlington officials are also trying to determine its impact on the upcoming county budget

### [Social distancing: Williamsburg City Council met via video, and the public participated](#)

### [Hampton's top prosecutor criticizes judges for hearings held amid coronavirus concerns](#)

A jury trial in a Hampton gun possession case this week likely marked the last such trial in Hampton for quite a while.

## March 18

### [Loudoun County board opposes sending letter to governor requesting closure of gathering places](#)



**With budgets to review, local governments seek legal help to balance COVID-19 precautions, public participation**

**As virus forces shutdown, rural Northern Neck library works to fill essential role for community**

**Virus threat pushes jail head, prosecutors to release inmates at Middle River Regional Jail**

Middle River Regional Jail in Verona has started releasing some non-violent offenders in an effort to reduce the jail population as the threat of the coronavirus continues to grow

**Amazon to hire 1,400 Virginians to meet order surge, donate \$1M to Arlington nonprofits**

The company will also add \$2/hour to employees' current hourly rates through end of April

**Arlington County residents get tested at drive-thru coronavirus testing site**

As COVID-19 cases spike in Virginia and the D.C. area, Arlington County is stepping up its efforts to test those who are showing symptoms of the novel coronavirus

**Central Virginia's First Drive-Through Coronavirus Tests Begin**

More than 100 people were tested for the coronavirus disease at the first drive-through testing site in Central Virginia on Wednesday

**Goodyear shutting down operations until at least April 3**

Citing a sudden decline in market demand with the spread of the coronavirus, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. is shutting down manufacturing until at least April 3, according to a company statement. Goodyear is Danville's largest employer with about 2,000 workers