

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Governor Update

Speaker Jim Scheer joined Gov. Ricketts for the Governor's press conference today following the passage of the emergency funding package by the Nebraska Legislature. Ricketts praised the Legislature's ability to come together and unanimously pass the package through for the common good of the state.

Evictions

The Apartment Association of Nebraska announced its members would be suspending evictions for non-payment of rent for 90 days. ¹ Gov. Ricketts also announced that by executive order, he is waiving a statute requiring courts to hear eviction cases within a certain time period, extending eviction hearings for non-payment of rent to May 31. Evictions due to criminal activity or vandalism will still continue under normal policies and procedures, Ricketts added.

Directed Health Measures

As of this afternoon there are 66 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Nebraska. However, there have been new community spread cases reported in Dodge, Saunders, and Lancaster Counties. Gov. Ricketts announced that he would be implementing directed health measures in those counties later this afternoon. Ricketts said schools should not plan on students returning this year.

Previously, directed health measures were based on educational service units, or ESUs. Gov. Ricketts announced that moving forward, all directives will be based on local health department jurisdictions as opposed to ESUs. A map of each public health department by county can be found [here](#).

American Red Cross

Weyan Dun, community volunteer leader for the American Red Cross, urged Nebraskans to donate blood if they are able. Red Cross is critically short of blood supplies but is already seeing positive results from a push for donors. However, Dun said that a strong blood supply is critical, and will mitigate another health crisis from avoiding a shortage.

Q&A

Gov. Ricketts was asked if it was realistic for things to be back to normal by Easter. He said it's hard to say, as we don't know how things will look come Easter. He said we are currently focused on doing our best to slow the virus and loosen restrictions when it's safe to do so, as quickly as possible. Someone also asked if Ricketts planned on implementing a statewide measure, and he said no. He said that it doesn't make sense to place the same restrictions for communities with community spread cases, for communities that have no reported cases at all.

Nebraska Legislature

The Nebraska Legislature passed its emergency appropriation to the Governor's Emergency Fund on a 45-0 vote, with four members excused. ² The bill was immediately signed into effect by the Governor moments later. *For a breakdown of the \$83.6 million package, please refer to the handout I included in today's email. Speaker Jim Scheer made a few announcements following the vote. The first was that he doesn't know when the Legislature will come back into session,

¹ https://journalstar.com/business/local/nebraska-apartment-group-recommends--day-halt-to-evictions/article_df18ea65-8e9f-509f-8d56-bfdde515a567.html#tracking-source=home-the-latest

² https://www.omaha.com/livewellnebraska/nebraska-legislature-approves-ricketts-signs-into-law-million-measure-for/article_d99c646e-a96f-55ec-96e7-5022dc81f628.html

but he knows they will not meet the two weeks before the primary election (May 12). When senators return, they will prioritize the budget bills and claims bill. Scheer also asked senators to help him make decisions on the priority of other bills and to not hang other bills onto those priority bills at that time. Scheer also announced that when senators come back, it will be for three weeks—likely meeting Monday through Saturday. "The state will be looking at us. We need to be statesmen," Scheer said.

Lancaster County

This afternoon, Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird announced that Lincoln had its first reported case of community spread COVID-19. With that news brings a directed health measure for Lancaster County, joining Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, and Washington Counties.

Starting at 8 a.m. Thursday morning, no gatherings of over 10 people for any reason in a single space will be prohibited. This directive health measure can be enforced by police if necessary and requires restaurants and bars in Lincoln to close their dining areas immediately and move to takeout, delivery or curbside-only service until further notice. The measure also restricts alcohol sales to carryout and delivery only. The measure will be in place through May 6.³

Federal:

Stimulus Package

The United States Senate was close to taking a vote on the proposed \$2 trillion economic stimulus plan in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan marks the largest rescue package in American history. The legislation covers an array of programs, including direct payments to Americans, expansion of unemployment insurance, billions in aid to large and small businesses, and additional funding for the health care industry.⁴ Also included in the package:

- A one-time \$1,200 check would be sent to most adults making \$75,000 or less annually, according to past tax returns. A \$500 payment would also be sent to cover every child in qualifying households.
- Extended unemployment insurance program for laid-off workers. According to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, this insurance will provide laid-off workers up to four months of full pay. It will also raise the maximum unemployment insurance benefit by \$600 per week. It will apply to traditional workers for small and large businesses as well as those who are self-employed and workers in the gig economy.
- \$150 billion for the health care system, including funding for hospitals, research, treatment and the Strategic National Stockpile to raise supplies of ventilators, masks and other equipment. Of that, \$100 billion will go to hospitals and the health system and \$1 billion to the Indian Health Service.
- \$150 billion to state and local governments to address spending shortages related to the coronavirus pandemic.
- \$350 billion for small businesses impacted by the pandemic in the form of loans. Some loans will be eligible for forgiveness.

The package also includes oversight initiatives sought by Democratic senators. First, it creates a Treasury Department inspector general for pandemic recovery, as well as a Pandemic Response Accountability Committee to oversee loans to businesses.

It also prohibits businesses controlled by the president, vice president, members of Congress, or heads of executive departments from participating in the loan or investment programs, according to staff from Sen. Schumer's office. This requirement will also be extended to family members of those officials listed above.

³ https://journalstar.com/news/local/lincoln-mayor-orders-greater-restrictions-people-max-is-now-mandatory/article_cf1484ee-6af9-5347-a6b1-a8a0cbd4e53e.html#tracking-source=home-breaking

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/25/818881845/senate-reaches-historic-deal-on-2t-coronavirus-economic-rescue-package>

There are also provisions to ban stock buybacks for the term of government assistance plus an additional year for any company receiving a government loan from the bill. In addition, it establishes worker protections attached to federal loans for businesses and prohibits airlines from using the funds for CEO bonuses.