

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Business Survey

Tomorrow is the final day for businesses to complete the Nebraska Business COVID-19 Survey, which was created by the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Governor Ricketts' Office, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and the University of Nebraska.

The survey will serve as a tool to determine the best ways to support the business community going forward, and all business owners in Nebraska are encouraged to participate. The deadline for submissions is Friday, April 24, at 5 p.m. CT. You can complete the survey [here](#).

Governor Update

Gov. Ricketts began his daily press briefing by announcing 50,000 Nebraskans have now registered through [TestNebraska.org](https://www.testnebraska.org). He encouraged all Nebraskans to participate and to challenge their family and friends to do the same.

Agriculture

Director for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture Steve Wellman joined Gov. Ricketts to discuss guidance for farmer's markets, garden centers and nurseries. Wellman said those businesses should help customers abide by social distancing guidelines. As for farmer's markets, Wellman said vendors should resist handing out samples, keep hand sanitizer available for customers, and to handle goods with gloves. He also reminded viewers that WIC participants can get coupons to buy fresh, local produce and other goods at farmer's markets.

Wellman also announced the creation of the Detasseling Task Force, which will address how detasseling will operate this year in order to keep detassellers safe.

WIC

Caryn Vincent from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services spoke about Nebraska's Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, program. Vincent said WIC serves 33,000 Nebraskans and expects the number of participants to grow amid the pandemic. Vincent explained the mission of WIC, which is supplying families with nutritious foods. Qualification is based on factors such as income, age of children, and recent pregnancies or births. Vincent also announced that WIC is providing its nutrition counseling and support through virtual means.

Q&A

Q: Why is there a delay in unemployment payments?

A: Ricketts: The software for the Pandemic Unemployment Program has just recently become available. The significant spike in applications has also slowed processing.

Q: Despite mail-in ballots, some Democrats are criticizing the move to keep polls open for the May 12th primary. Response to that claim?

A: Ricketts: We do not want to disenfranchise voters who want to go to the polls.

Q: What are the plans regarding the directive health measures currently in place in Hall and Dawson Counties?

A: Ricketts: Those are expiring soon and being reviewed. We will make an announcement soon.

Q: Is social distancing working in Nebraska? Any plans to let up on the guidelines?

A: Ricketts: Nebraska will be practicing social distancing for a while, until there is a vaccine. He noted models have been unreliable and that the peak does not matter as much as our ability to manage Nebraska's health care system. The goal is to make sure anyone that needs an intensive care bed or a ventilator has access to one if needed. In May, Nebraska will relax some of the restrictions, but there will be social distancing still.

Federal:

Small Business Loans

In a [guidance](#) issued today, the Treasury Department has asked publicly traded companies that obtained loans through the Paycheck Protection Program to repay their loans. Approximately 150 public companies received about \$600 million in loans through the program, which was intended to aid small businesses through the pandemic. "The intent of this money was not for big, public companies that have access to capital," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

The Treasury Department said that it is unlikely that a publicly traded company with substantial market value would be able to prove the need for a government-backed loan. Congress is expected to approve an additional \$320 billion for the program, however many business owners are skeptical that there will be enough to go around. ¹

Congress

House lawmakers returned to the Capitol today to vote on additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program, hospitals, and testing expansion. Lawmakers will be divided into 8 groups of about 60 people and take turns entering the chamber to vote. The chamber will be cleaned between every two groups of voters. The House is expected to approve the measure by the end of Thursday, with President Donald Trump ready to sign the bill into law as soon as possible. ²

¹ https://www.wsj.com/articles/public-companies-have-to-repay-small-business-rescue-loans-11587670442?mod=hp_lead_pos6

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/house-set-to-approve-484-billion-bill-to-aid-small-businesses-hospitals-11587641659>