

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Governor Update

Gov. Pete Ricketts began his Wednesday press briefing by reminding Nebraskans of the ‘Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy.’ He then announced new changes to three Directive Health Measures, one of which is for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

DHMs

Gov. Ricketts announced that Lincoln-Lancaster County, West Central (North Platte), and Three Rivers (Fremont) Health Districts would be extending their current DHMs until May 10. Starting May 11, those areas will be able to open salons and restaurants under certain rules.

Developmental Disabilities

Interim Director for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities Tony Green joined Gov. Ricketts to discuss what the state is doing to care for those with developmental disabilities amid COVID-19. He said that some changes have taken place, including retainer payments for providers regardless if person is there or not, remote deliveries when applicable, and an increase in payments. Green said that these changes allow DD service providers more flexibility in caring for those who depend on others to help manage their lives. To read more on COVID-19 in relations to developmental disabilities and providers, please visit [here](#).

Q&A

Q: What are your recommendations for veterans’ events on Memorial Day?

A: Ricketts: The Department of Veterans Affairs is working on announcing virtual commemorations, stay tuned.

Q: Some predict Nebraska has not hit its peak of cases yet, are you concerned about a second wave happening?

A: Ricketts: Experts have said that you cannot control the amount of people that get infected, but you can reduce the peak so healthcare is still available for those who need it--and Nebraska has succeeded at that.

Q: Have we asked meatpackers and processors to take certain measures to protect employees?

A: Ricketts: We have consulted with UNMC, who have in turn been in contact with the plants. UNMC officials have also visited the plants and offered guidance regarding making the workplace safer.

Q: Are we going to test the general population?

A: Not yet, our priorities are to test first responders and healthcare workers first, then those with symptoms, and then the general population.

Federal:

Education

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced earlier this week that \$300 million from the first coronavirus relief package will go toward two different grants. \$180 million is going to the “Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant,” and \$127.5 million to the “Reimagining Workforce Preparation Grant.”¹

States will be able to apply and access the grant money by creating proposals to fund virtual or work-based learning programs. Homeschool families are also eligible to apply for the grants. However, the \$300 million is short of the \$200 billion requested by numerous education groups, who say the funding is needed in order to maintain basic services.

Paycheck Protection Program

Today, the Small Business Administration will only allow small financial institutions to access the Paycheck Protection Program.² Beginning at 4 pm today, until midnight, applications for the PPP will only be accepted from financial institutions that hold less than \$1 billion in assets. According to Jovita Carranza, SBA Administrator, the temporary change is intended to help small community lenders and their small business customers have access to the program.

COVID-19 Relief

Republican and Democratic lawmakers have begun listing their priorities for the next round of coronavirus relief legislation. Democrats have made it clear they hope to see funding for state and local governments, while Republicans say that can only be done if it comes with liability protection. However, Senate leadership is seemingly not on the same page. See below for what Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer had to say.

[From a CNN report:](#) Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Wednesday that he is open to considering more money to help state and local governments respond to the coronavirus outbreak, but said it would be conditioned on passing liability reforms to protect employers from a rash of lawsuits he believes will be aimed at them after the pandemic clears and businesses reopen. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Tuesday that by pressing for liability protections for businesses and health care professionals in the next coronavirus bill McConnell is "putting barriers in the way of giving state and local governments desperate money they need."

¹ https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/29/847783190/devos-to-use-coronavirus-relief-funds-for-home-schooling-microgrants?utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=nprblogscoronavirusliveupdates

² https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/29/847940090/scram-big-banks-small-lenders-take-over-sba-lending-program-for-a-night?utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=nprblogscoronavirusliveupdates