

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Protest Meetings

The Nebraska Department of Revenue issued [guidelines](#) for Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties regarding the upcoming real property protest hearings taking place June 1 to July 25. To safely conduct the real property valuation protest hearings, the Nebraska Department of Revenue is advising participants to:

- Encourage virtual or telephonic meetings with the consent of the taxpayers
- Require appointments to be made in advance to limit the number of taxpayers showing up at one time
- Prevent crowding of taxpayers by securing alternate spaces where referees and/or CBOE members can conduct meetings
- Require taxpayers to abide by the social distancing protocols during meetings by following the six-foot rule
- Encourage taxpayers to e-mail or fax their supporting documents ahead of the meeting time
- Limit the number of taxpayers who can attend a single meeting to no more than two at each individual session
- Make hand sanitizer available to taxpayers, CBOE members, referees, and others during meetings
- Wipe down meeting areas with sanitization wipes prior to each individual session
- Encourage the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, or Plexiglass to protect referees, CBOE members, and taxpayers. PPE can be obtained from county health departments

TestNebraska

Late this morning, Sens. Machaela Cavanaugh, Megan Hunt, Carol Blood, and Rick Kolowski sent a letter to Gov. Pete Ricketts demanding he terminate the TestNebraska contract with tech company Nomi Health. The letter states that \$27 million should be reinvested back into the state's county public health labs and healthcare providers, and that the assessment questionnaire should be reassigned to the Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NEHII), which is HIPAA compliant and Nebraska's designated medical information repository. To read the press release and full letter, [click here](#).

AARP

The AARP Nebraska also issued a [letter](#) to Gov. Ricketts this morning, asking for the Governor to release specific information pertaining to long-term care facilities. The letter, written by Todd Stubbendieck, presses that information should be made public regarding nursing homes and assisted living communities that have confirmed COVID-19 cases among residents and staff. From the letter:

“Again, we are calling on the state to publicly release the names of nursing homes and assisted living communities with confirmed COVID-19 cases among residents and staff. This transparency is critical for public health and the health and well-being of the residents and staff of these facilities. Moreover, residents and family members deserve to have this information for their own health decisions as they consider possible next steps and interventions for their loved ones. To be clear, we are not advocating for the disclosure of any private patient information. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) rightfully protects the privacy of the individual. It does not, however, preclude a state health agency from releasing the names of facilities, because those facilities are not a covered entity as defined by the law.

Many states are already disclosing this critical information, going so far as posting it daily on their health department's

website. Nursing facilities are ground zero in the fight against the coronavirus and more information and greater transparency is a key tool in this fight.”

Governor Update

Gov. Ricketts began his Monday press briefing by announcing that the TestNebraska initiative has tested 2,700 people since launching last week. He then announced that DHMs for the Two Rivers, South Heartland, and Public Health Solutions Health Departments would be loosened on May 18. After May 18, the Central Health District that includes Grand Island will be the only health department with full restrictions in Nebraska.

Election

Gov. Ricketts announced he has signed an executive order allowing people from different counties to work at the polls ahead of Tuesday’s primary election. He also announced that Nebraska National Guard members would be assisting at the polls tomorrow in eight counties.

Youth Activities

Gov. Ricketts announced that baseball and softball practices would be able to begin June 1, with games allowed to take place starting June 18. However, the games will come with restrictions such as: using own sporting equipment as much as possible, spreading players out, bringing own drinks and snacks, and only allowing household members to attend the game. Ricketts said baseball and softball are being given the OK to resume because the sports are naturally socially distant.

Q&A

Q: The Nebraska AARP announced it sent a letter to you asking for specific data related to long-term care facilities. What is your response?

A: Ricketts: Nebraska’s policy is to only release aggregate numbers on long-term care facilities. Families should feel free to reach out to long-term care facilities if they want to know if there are cases at a certain facility.

Q: Are you satisfied with the number of tests so far that TestNebraska has conducted? Is the investment worth it?

A: Ricketts: Yes, to both. It is worth it to expand testing and get a better picture of what is happening in our state.

Q: A few senators have requested an end to the TestNebraska partnership. What is your response?

A: Ricketts: It is ludicrous that the senators do not want more testing. We wanted to be able to provide more testing, and UNMC or public health labs could have been able to do it in the timeframe TestNebraska could, even for \$27 million (which is what the TestNebraska initiative cost). Every state has been working to secure more testing, and this was our chance to do so quickly.

Q: How do you plan to use the rest of the 540,000 tests when only 150,000 people have signed up?

A: Ricketts: We will save them for later, since we will likely be testing until a vaccine is approved and readily available.

Federal:

Stimulus Checks

White House economic advisors are reportedly considering a proposal crafted by the American Enterprise Institute and Hoover Institution that would allow Americans to take up to \$5,000 loan checks in exchange for delayed Social Security benefits. ¹ Congress could offer voluntary loans of up to \$5,000 in exchange for a delay in receiving Social Security benefits in retirement up to three months. However, it is unclear if President Donald Trump would support such measure, as he has been vocal on not altering Social Security.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shaharziv/2020/05/11/proposal-5000-stimulus-check-loan-in-exchange-for-delayed-social-security-benefits/#755a840a7981>