



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

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Contact: Crystal Staley
502.545.3714
502.564.2611

Sebastian Kitchen
502.330.0799
502.564.2611

Gov. Beshear Praises Faith Leaders Helping in COVID-19 Fight

Governor warns progress can be undone, urges worshipping at home during special week
Visit the Governor's [Facebook page](#) to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 9, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Thursday praised the actions and sacrifices of all Kentuckians – and faith leaders in particular – in the fight against the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

“Our faith community is leading during this time,” the Governor said. “I couldn’t be more grateful and I couldn’t be more proud of our pastors, ministers, rabbis, imams, deacons and everyone else for not only recognizing that we need to be worshipping at home, but for all that they offer.”

Gov. Beshear noted this weekend holds special significance for several faiths, including Passover and Easter celebrations.

“These are very special times. But it’s very important that we worship from home, or a non-in-person setting. We now know that just from one revival in Hopkins County we’ve seen 54 cases and six deaths,” he said, adding that the death toll includes two new fatalities reported today.

The Governor noted that some of those people weren’t at the revival but were infected out in the community by those who had been at the service.

“I have never been as sure of anything in my faith as I am in this: We must protect each other,” Gov. Beshear said. He said now is not the time to make an exception on social distancing.

“Let’s make sure we do even better this weekend than we did last weekend.... We are in a test of our humanity,” Gov. Beshear said. “And you are passing it. But here’s the challenge: We have to pass it every day, we have to pass it every hour of every day.”

The Governor played a video from faith leaders from all over the commonwealth and thanked them for coming together to support remote services and for urging their members to stay healthy and worship at home.

Gov. Beshear also thanked Richard Nelson, executive director of the Commonwealth Policy Center, for sending a letter in support of the state’s policy to stop the spread of the virus by banning mass gatherings, including in-person religious services this upcoming weekend.

While mass gatherings are banned and many travel restrictions are in place, the Governor has told Kentuckians not to worry about the Easter Bunny, who has been deemed an “essential worker” and will be able to travel and work this weekend.

Popular state parks closed

In a move to prevent crowds from congregating, Gov. Beshear announced that Natural Bridge and Cumberland Falls state resort parks have been ordered closed.

“We’re trying to keep as many of our state parks open as possible, but where we have seen crowds gather in a way to where we know we have to take action, we are,” the Governor said.

He said the move came after reports that people were not practicing good social distancing on the trails.

Workers compensation order

Gov. Beshear has [expanded the number](#) of workers who can receive workers compensation if they are ordered to be quarantined.

La Tasha Buckner, the Governor’s general counsel and chief of staff, said the coverage previously had been extended to health care workers and first responders.

“This is a group of people who have been on the front lines as well,” Buckner said. “Now we have a larger category of people who are required because of their jobs to have a lot of interaction with other people. And because of that they are at a higher risk for COVID exposure.”

The coverage now will be extended to military, active National Guard, child-care workers, grocery workers, corrections officers, domestic violence shelter workers, child advocacy workers, rape crisis center workers, postal workers and Department of Community Based Services workers.

Unemployment insurance update

Gov. Beshear offered one area of good news amid the deepening job losses across the commonwealth and nationwide: Beginning this evening, Kentuckians collecting unemployment insurance will receive an additional \$600 payment. Officials also are working to address the unprecedented number of claims.

“We are going to keep adding staff until we can answer every call,” said Deputy Secretary Josh Benton from the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. “Our system is taking in about 14,000 claims a day. To date, we have paid more than 208,800 Kentuckians more than \$107 million in unemployment insurance and we are working to keep up each week and pay claims on time. Fortunately, we have received the additional federal funding stream and an additional \$600 unemployment insurance payment is coming soon. No one needs to reapply.”

The additional, federally funded benefit, which is retroactive to March 29, will be disbursed automatically and will come as a separate payment from other unemployment payments.

“We are working harder and faster than any other state,” the Governor said in reference to the state’s action to process unemployment. “We will keep working to make sure all Kentuckians get the help and resources they need.”

Long-term care update

Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner for the Department for Public Health, provided an update on efforts to address problems at long-term care facilities amid the coronavirus outbreak.

He explained how state and local leaders worked to help River’s Bend Retirement Center near Paducah. Among the measures was to place the first four medical student volunteers into such settings.

“They are now already at work and embedded in the teams,” Dr. Stack said, calling the medical students heroes. He said innovative solutions across agencies are required to save people.

“We are working as hard as we can to deliver solutions that we can deliver for the entire commonwealth,” Dr. Stack said.

Social media

The Governor showed his daily selections of social media posts, which he says help to uplift spirits and depict Kentuckians following the rules that help stop the spread of the virus. The Governor highlighted a post from J.D. Shelburne, a country music singer and songwriter from Taylorsville, regarding his upcoming [livestream concert](#) to benefit the [Team Kentucky Fund](#). WLKY in Louisville and Shelburne will host the concert Friday.

Case information

As of 5 p.m. April 9, Gov. Beshear said there were at least [1,452 coronavirus cases](#) in Kentucky, 134 of which were newly confirmed. The new total includes some revision after the discovery of duplicate reports. The Governor said 426 total COVID-19 patients have needed hospitalization, with 228 currently in the hospital and 105 of those being in intensive care.

“We can confirm at least 395 Kentuckians have recovered from the coronavirus,” the Governor said.

Gov. Beshear said six new deaths were reported Thursday, raising the state’s toll to 79 deaths related to the virus.

“Their families are going to miss them,” he said. “Their community is going to miss them.”

As a sign of compassion and renewal, the Governor asked Kentuckians to join him in lighting their homes green tonight in honor of the lives lost.

“Let’s make sure that we light our houses, our businesses, our facilities green tonight, and every night that we lose people. It makes a difference,” he said. “Let’s also remember how hard it must be to lose somebody during this coronavirus when you can’t have the same type of funeral or closure. Let’s make sure we show even more care and more compassion.”

The Governor also honored David Pitman who was the first Pulaski County resident known to have passed from coronavirus. The Lexington [Herald-Leader](#) wrote the story about Pitman and his son, Dustin, who honored him with an online video message and warned Kentuckians to take the virus seriously.

More information

The Governor is asking all Kentuckians to continue to fight the spread of the virus by following his [10-step guidance](#), which includes practicing social distancing and staying *healthy at home*. Gov. Beshear says these efforts have the potential to save the lives of as many as 11,000 Kentuckians.

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at [governor.ky.gov](#), [kycovid19.ky.gov](#) and the Governor’s official social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#). Watch the Governor’s social media accounts at 5 p.m. ET each day for his regular briefing.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages people to follow these [steps to prevent illness](#). Kentuckians who want advice can call the state hotline at 800-722-5725 or call their local health care provider.

Team Kentucky hashtags for social media

#TeamKentucky, #TogetherKY, #Patriot and new Saturday #HealthyAtHome.

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