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Gov. Beshear Provides Update on COVID-19

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 15, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Monday updated Kentuckians on steps the state is taking to address the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

“We’re going to get through this together, we are going to come out the other side, we are going to rebuild and restart our economy, we’re going to take care of each other as we’re going through this, and I believe we have the opportunity to be not only stronger, but better coming out of it,” the Governor said. “We have seen what we are capable of when we come together, and that ought to tell us what our potential is moving forward.”

Gov. Beshear and administration officials also spoke about the importance of wearing masks and aiding contact tracing efforts in preventing spikes of the virus in the commonwealth. Officials also reminded Kentuckians that today is the deadline to request an absentee ballot for the upcoming

primary elections and of the need to fill out U.S. Census forms. Updates on education and corrections also were provided.

Final Day to Request Absentee Ballot

Gov. Beshear reminded Kentuckians that they have until midnight tonight to request an absentee ballot for the upcoming primary elections.

“The election is eight days away. Get online, make sure that you order this,” the Governor said. “Voting is the bedrock of our democracy. Agree, don’t agree with a candidate or elected official – still vote. It’s the way we peacefully transition power, it’s the way we make our voices heard.”

Because of the pandemic, all voters are eligible to use the Absentee Ballot Application Portal available online. A link to the State Board of Elections’ portal can be found at govoteky.com.

Masks Prevent Outbreaks

Gov. Beshear and Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner for the Department for Public Health, stressed the importance of wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect Kentucky from experiencing the surges and spikes that are being seen in other states.

“The one most important thing we can do to prevent a spike, to make our reopening go the way we want it to, is to wear a mask. I know this has become part of what some people call a cultural war. Folks, this is not. This is key to keeping each other alive. It’s the key to keeping our reopening,” the Governor said. “You want our kids to be back in school as soon as possible and you’re not wearing a mask? You could be preventing what it is you want to see. I know it’s not comfortable. But when every single health official – those working for President Trump, those working for me – say this is the very shot we have, shouldn’t we be willing to do it?”

Gov. Beshear noted that Dr. Anthony Fauci, the renowned infectious disease expert on the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and Dr. Jerome Adams, the U.S. Surgeon General, both say wearing a mask is the best way to halt the spread of the virus.

The Governor said he wears a mask to keep his family safe and told about the mask he wore Monday to the news conference.

“Today, I wear the mask sent to me by David Turner Jr. David is an 8-year-old boy fighting brain cancer. I met with David before COVID hit, on Jan. 23. He had come in for a rally at the Capitol that day. He came into my office. He sat in a chair, pulled up to my desk. I said, ‘Come on, you’re governor for at least 15 seconds – what are you going to do with it?’ He declared that day National Ice Cream Day in Kentucky. This is something I’ll never forget. It’s one of the best moments I’ve had as governor,” said the Governor. “I am willing to wear this mask for my kids. I most certainly am willing to wear it for David. I think we can all do the same.”

The renewed emphasis on wearing masks comes as several states are starting to see troubling growth in the number of coronavirus cases. Dr. Stack showed graphs showing recent increases in Arizona, South Carolina and Florida.

“If you look at all three of these other states, you see a sudden increase. That sudden increase is roughly 30 days ago. That’s about the middle of May,” Dr. Stack said. “That corresponds roughly with when social distancing restrictions were lifted in many of these states.”

He noted that in Houston, Texas, officials there are considering reopening NRG Stadium as a field hospital as cases in the state have soared to an average of more than 1,700 daily last week. He pointed out Arizona’s increase is happening despite a heatwave.

“If you’re hoping that the coronavirus will take a nap in the summer, it’s 106 degrees in Phoenix, Arizona, today,” Dr. Stack said. “It kind of suggests that if that kind of heat doesn’t slow it down, I’m not sure what kind will.”

Contact Tracing Efforts

Gov. Beshear and Mark Carter, named by the Governor to lead the state’s contact tracing efforts, also highlighted the importance of tracing in keeping the virus under control in the commonwealth.

“Contact tracing isn’t a new approach. It’s been used by health departments for decades,” Carter said. “All we’re trying to do here when we identify someone who’s tested positive for COVID is just to identify the folks that that person has been in contact with recently, and then get in touch

with those folks and let them know what they can do to protect their own health and to protect their family and friends and loved ones.”

Kentucky’s Contact Tracing and Tracking system (KYCTT) launched May 21. Users have been onboarded to the online system in four waves. At last count, more than 340 users were in the system and more than 600 local contact tracers were working to support the efforts.

Carter also warned about scams connected to the tracing efforts.

“A couple words of caution with all the fraud and spam calls that you get these days: This is a private process, no one will ever ask you for bank account information or credit cards or anything like that,” said Carter. “If it happens, you need to call the hotline in the Attorney General’s office and report that call. You may be asked about your address and who lives with you, but that’s just to identify your contacts. The fraudulent stuff with social security numbers and bank accounts, call the Attorney General.”

People can call to report scams to the Attorney General at 888-432-9257.

Contact tracers will call people who may have been exposed from 1-844-KYTRACE (1-844-598-7223) to offer information and resources to keep them and others safe.

Case information

As of 4 p.m. June 15, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 12,647 COVID-19 cases in Kentucky. The Governor provided updated information about coronavirus cases newly confirmed Sunday and Monday in Kentucky.

On Sunday, 85 new cases of coronavirus were reported. On Monday, 120 new cases were reported.

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear also announced one new death reported Sunday and five new deaths reported Monday. The total number of reported deaths attributed to coronavirus stands at 505 Kentuckians.

“We lost one additional Kentuckian on Sunday. One is too many, but that one on Sunday put us at 500 deaths due to COVID-19. As Governor, but I think as any citizen of the commonwealth, you never want to see us lose 500 individuals in the course of only three months to this virus,” he said. “I know it’s a virus we’d never seen. It’s a virus that we’re actively fighting against, but in that short period of time, taking 500 people is devastating. It’s awful.”

The death reported Sunday was a 91-year-old woman from Henry County. The deaths reported Monday include an 83-year-old woman from Fayette County; a 47-year-old man from Jefferson County; a 61-year-old woman from Logan County; and two women, ages 82 and 85, from Warren County.

The Governor reminded Kentuckians to light their homes, places of business and places of worship green for compassion.

“That’s six people we’ve lost in the past two days, six too many,” said Gov. Beshear. “Let’s remember, let’s keep those green lights on to show compassion to everybody who needs it. It’s an emotion that all of these families, 505 of them now, need. It lets people know they are not alone in a time that is incredibly difficult.”

At least 3,416 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus. For additional information, including up-to-date lists of positive cases and deaths, as well as breakdowns of coronavirus infections by county, race and ethnicity: for Sunday’s information, [click here](#); for Monday’s information, [click here](#).

Education Update

Today, Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman offered an update on recent proposals for changes aimed at helping schools better represent all the students they serve and the road ahead as schools hope to reopen for the fall.

“The task force includes representatives of Kentucky’s educational cooperatives, educational partner organizations such as the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, Kentucky School Board Association, Kentucky Parent Teacher Association, Kentucky Education Association and Kentucky High School Athletic Association, as well as Kentucky Educational Television, the

Southern Regional Education Board and other relevant partners,” Lt. Gov. Coleman said. “This task force focuses on providing timely information, research and instructional resources to our school districts as they dealt with an unprecedented length of school closure and are now trying to figure out ways to reopen amid the crisis.”

On March 16, the Kentucky Department of Education created the Education Continuation Task Force, which is comprised of K-12 education stakeholders, that is charged with developing plans to continue education in the state during this unprecedented time.

Right now, the task force is working to create guidance to help districts plan for fall.

Corrections Update

J. Michael Brown, secretary for the Governor’s Executive Cabinet, spoke about current conditions and efforts to keep staff and inmates healthy and safe at the state’s correctional facilities.

Kentucky currently is performing mass testing of all inmates and staff members at the Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women (KCIW) in Shelby County. The move comes after three staffers and 11 inmates tested positive for COVID-19. More than 270 of the facility’s 639 inmates have been tested thus far.

“First, good news, no one is hospitalized from the facility. At the end of May three employees tested positive and 11 inmates, so we used what we learned from Green River and we immediately stepped up mitigation efforts and started mass testing,” said Secretary Brown. “We will complete testing at KCIW by the end of this week. We are confident using the methods we’ve learned that we will bring case numbers at KCIW under control.”

At Green River Correctional Complex where a previous outbreak sickened dozens, an initial retesting found 10 new positive coronavirus cases among the 876 retested.

Supreme Court Ruling

Gov. Beshear hailed a ruling handed down today by the U.S. Supreme Court that extended protections from Title VII of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 to gay, lesbian and transsexual

people. The ruling means it is illegal to fire or refuse housing based on someone's sexual orientation.

"The Supreme Court has ruled, I think rightfully so, that you can't fire someone or deny them housing simply because they are gay or transgender," said Gov. Beshear. "I believe discrimination in all of its forms is wrong. We should all be judged by our merit. They did the right thing."

Major PPE Donation

Gov. Beshear praised a company with a warehouse in Louisville that made a significant donation of personal protective equipment (PPE) to help the commonwealth.

Solutions 2 Go LLC is based in Ontario, Canada, but has operations in Louisville. Company officials have donated 52,800 KN95 masks that will be distributed to Kentucky health care providers.

"This is a major donation," the Governor said. "It's one of the hardest PPE pieces to find and it's really going to help us."

Census Update

Gov. Beshear reminded Kentuckians of the critical importance of filling out their U.S. Census forms. Those who have not can fill out the Census at my2020census.gov or by phone at [844-330-2020](tel:844-330-2020) (English) or [844-468-2020](tel:844-468-2020) (Spanish).

More Information

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 [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Kentuckians can also access translated COVID-19 information and daily summaries of the Governor's news conference at tinyurl.com/kygovespanol (Spanish) and tinyurl.com/kygovtranslations (more than 20 additional languages).

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