



## **Governor Northam's Briefing: Friday, April 17, 2020**

- Coordinating plans regionally with MD, DC and NC. White House guidelines on moving forward are consistent with everything Virginia has been doing based on science and data. We are still seeing more cases each day, not fewer.
- \$1.6 billion in federal stimulus funds made available to Virginia for COVID response and to aid local governments
- FEMA sign off to make accommodations available for first responders
- Even though cases are going up, we know social distancing is helping. We will continue to see new case and unfortunately deaths, but our actions are keeping these to a level our hospitals can handle.
- Northfield contract PPE has arrived. 24,000 N95 masks, gowns and gloves. Supply chain issues are still a problem. They are diversifying their sources. Proud of innovative measures to conserve PPP
- To assist nursing homes and long term care facilities, **the Governor is issuing Executive Order 57 that will ease licensing restrictions on nurse practitioners and doctors**
- Regarding jails, he has encouraged locals not to send folks to jail if at all possible and to use alternatives. Local public safety agencies have stepped up. Population reduced 17%. We've also seen a 67% decrease in number of folks jailed on misdemeanor charges. All done with public safety in mind. Weekly conference calls with local stakeholders.
- Re Jobs: More than 106,000 unemployment claims last week. 410,000 in the last month
- Virginia has added call centers and the portal for payroll records for independent contractors and gig workers will go live tonight. They will give back pay to those whose applications have taken longer to process. Added call centers in Grundy and Newport News.
- Thank you to all on the front lines, public safety and telecommunications professionals.
- The Governor wants all business to re-open. Must be done with deliberation using science, testing and data, lest we spike again.
- Latest Virginia numbers: **7,491 positive cases (+602) and 231 deaths (+23). 1,221 hospitalizations, 48,997 tested.** There has been an uptick in central Shenandoah Health District. It is another nursing home outbreak

## Q & A

Q. Speaker Filler Corn and remote voting. What do you think of this idea as we enter the reconvened session

A. Governor: We have possibility for a July, August or September session to reforecast. The option of remote voting as we move forward is something he is open to and commends her for pursuing it.

Q. Why does VDH refuse to release information on COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes. Could you do an emergency order? Ohio does it.

A. Dr. Oliver – it is a statutory requirement. Virginia Code treats the facilities as facilities or on individuals. Governor Northam – legislators have to do this.

Q. Pushback on social distancing orders and President Trump urging “Liberate Virginia”

A. Governor: Don’t have time to engage in Twitter wars. Doing all to keep Virginians safe and save lives.

Q. What are you envisioning for long-term tracking and testing in future phases?

A. Governor: CDC Guidelines from 4/16 are to have 14 days of declining cases. We don’t have that. We are increasing. We need adequate testing to test, track and isolate individuals. We are working to improve this on a daily basis. We have no national guidance on testing. Every Governor has to establish testing protocols on their own. We need to know we have adequate PPE. Staffing --- still an issue. The CDC Guidelines to get into phase I of recovery is not there for Virginia yet. The guidelines are working.

Q. Will MD/VA/DC/NC be coordinated for reopening business and easing of restrictions?

A. Yes, absolutely we will be as consistent as possible.

Q. Importance of following state code. Victims and families by Code have 45 days to respond to a parole issue, why wasn’t this followed?

A. Governor: Not sure about timing. He will look into the Virginia Parole Board decision.

Secretary Moran: We know this brings up pain and anguish. They asked was the process followed and they assured it was. The victim’s family was received. They do have 45 days and their input was received within the 45 days. A case of this seriousness requires a super majority vote of the Parole Board. They got that.

Q. When will testing requirements be revised

A. Dr. Forlano – If not today, Monday. Testing at nursing homes and those about to enter a congregant setting.

Dr. Carey – Our goal is to get to significantly higher testing levels. National shortage of testing is complicating this.

Q. State prisons with 87 staff and patient infections.....have you considered conditional pardons?

A. Governor: We have addressed these questions. Virginia is proud that we have the lowest recidivism rate in the country. We make sure they have workforce training, housing and adequate health care before they are released. In addition, making sure they are not a danger to society. We are doing all these things.

Secretary Moran: Given another tool – budget language proposed to provide Department of Corrections the ability to review those inmates for release. We are using the tools we have in humane manner. Governor’s clemency power would be difficult to achieve in a responsible fashion.

Q. Any thought to extending the order on elective surgeries to preserve PPE. Are we tethered to abutting states for reopening?

A. Governor: We plan to coordinate as best we can. We are blessed to have great hospitals. They’ve talked about consistency so that folks don’t “state-hop” to have their surgeries. We are in constant communication with hospital CEOs. We are not quite there yet to reopen for elective surgeries. While

hospitals are doing everything they can to prepare for the surge, their “bread and butter” elective surgeries are not happening. We are sensitive to all of this. Therefore no decision yet to extend the date.

Q. Medical providers and trial lawyers have asked for an order on liability protection for the medical community during the emergency.

A. Dr. Carey: Virginia law provides that except in cases of gross negligence they are protected from liability. There is significant protection under current law. The resolutions are under advisement with the Governor’s lawyers.

Q. Testing criteria and health care workers.

A. Dr. Forlano – Symptomatic health care workers have all been part of the testing criteria. We continue to receive reports on clinical diagnosis. The team is looking at data as of April 5 to include probable and confirmed cases.

Q. Post peak landscape in Virginia. What steps are being taken to get medications to treat CV-19 and to see who has already had the virus?

A. Governor Northam – Antibody tests are not as accessible enough to allow us to follow the trends. Regarding medications to treat CV-19 while waiting for a vaccination: There are clinical trials going on (UVA, VCU and others across USA). To-date he has not heard of any particular medicines that are effective.

Q. Working together with GOP colleagues. Why aren’t you working closer with them?

A. Governor: It’s not that he is ignoring what they are saying. We are looking at data from various sources to make decisions. It’s about keeping Virginia as safe as he can.

A. Yesterday’s “sit-in” at Capitol put themselves and all of us at risk. Look at the men and women fighting this battle every day. When you’ve seen the risk they are taking in putting their lives on the line, let’s get on the team to put the pandemic behind us.

**Next briefing, Monday, April 20**