

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATIVE LEADERS ISSUE GUIDANCE, ENCOURAGE UNITY

March 23, 2020

As West Virginia, and, indeed, the entire world grapples with the COVID-19 global pandemic, we should take a moment each day to pray for the medical professionals, first responders, and public servants who are working around the clock to halt the spread of this deadly virus. We also must pray for healing for those who are affected, and for the safety of all of us as we navigate this “new normal” in the coming weeks and months. In times of uncertainty or sorrow, it is extremely important that we remain mindful of our many blessings.

The global, national, and state response to this virus has highlighted the vital importance of public health policies and programs. In these trying times, we, the undersigned, want to assure the citizens of West Virginia that your legislative leaders are working in a bipartisan, cooperative manner to support both the public and private response to this critical issue. We have specifically avoided the typical blustering of political figures who seek to utilize a crisis for self-promotion. Rather, we are working together as a united front in a war against this pandemic. Our efforts are directed toward ensuring the wheels of government continue to operate and serve our citizens, questions from constituents are answered, economic recovery is planned, and, most importantly, the health of our citizens is protected.

Together, we want to reassure the public that legislative leadership within West Virginia is committed to taking all necessary measures to achieve victory over this virus. Now, is not the time for political grandstanding or dissension. Your bipartisan legislative team will work together to advise the executive branch on actions related to responding to the virus. Currently, we believe the Executive branch, working with F.E.M.A. and public health officials, have the tools and authority to aggressively respond to this constantly evolving crisis. Some folks have called for a special session of the legislature to address this issue. It is our belief that, during this immediate crisis, a special session is not yet necessary, but may be at a future date as the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. We believe this is a time to utilize the emergency powers of government, in consultation with legislative leaders, to aggressively

attack the problem. As the war against this virus evolves and tactics change, we stand ready to quickly implement any and all necessary legislative responses to this pandemic.

Everyone must prepare for some disruption to our lives at work and at home. We must also remain calm and set an example for our families, friends, and neighbors.

In addition to limiting public interaction, here is a list of common-sense daily measures we all can take in an effort to curb the spread and fight COVID -19:

- **Self-isolation** – Anyone older than 60, children, or those with underlying health conditions should stay home. While this is difficult for us as West Virginians, it means not visiting vulnerable grandparents or having large family gatherings until this threat subsides.
- **Testing** – Any person experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should be able to get a test. However, due to supply chain limitations, that is not possible right now. We are in working with federal officials to secure more testing for West Virginia. Until more tests are available, continue to request a physician's order for a test.
- **Telework** – Every West Virginian who is able to telework should do so.
- **Shiftwork** – For essential services where employers are unable to telework, employers should institute shiftwork to ensure six feet of distance between employees at all times.
- **Tourism** – Anything that would attract groups of visitors should be avoided for at least the next two weeks.
- **Medical Equipment** – Equipment is in short supply across the country and here in West Virginia. We are working with federal officials and private industries to get hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes, rehab facilities and first responders the equipment they need to do their jobs safely. This is also an opportunity for West Virginians, to assist in this effort by making masks for hospitals, health clinics and first responders.
- **Food and Supplies** – Supply chain issues will not be a problem. West Virginians should go to the grocery store to get what they need. Be respectful and do not hoard food or supplies.
- **Hygiene** – Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your hands to your face. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces like phones, keyboards, and doorknobs. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, drink lots of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

It would be irresponsible, selfish, and dangerous for anyone to not make a supreme effort to follow these guidelines. Good citizenship as well as ethical, moral behavior demands our best effort in this cause.

As West Virginians have done throughout history, in the midst of this global health dilemma, let us continue to support and help our neighbors in need. We may have occasional differences along the route, but we are always united in our common goal of health, prosperity, and opportunity for all.

Mitch Carmichael, Senate President

Roger Hanshaw, Speaker of House of Delegates

Roman Prezioso, Senate Minority Leader

Tim Miley, Minority Leader of House of Delegates