

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse

April 17, 2020

Around the Square

Governor DeWine's Plan to Reopen

As the rates of new cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 have begun to level off, Ohioans are looking to Governor Mike DeWine for information on the reopening of both business and recreation. Unfortunately, full reintegration remains a long way off. Starting May 1, the Governor hopes to begin a slow, phased introduction of businesses that have demonstrated impeccable ability to provide safe environments and follow health screening procedures, but which businesses will be able to open has not yet been announced. As of Thursday night, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases rose to 8,415. Over 2,000 of those have resulted in hospitalization, and nearly 400 have become fatal. Follow the latest statistics from the Ohio Department of Health [here](#).

National Guidelines Released to Governors

President Donald Trump released guidelines regarding lifting restrictions to Governors around the nation, but it is at to the discretion of each state's respective leader to ease off of protective measures. The President's plan includes three phases, each of which must be preceded by a 14 day decline in new cases and a guarantee of widely available testing. Phase one includes strict social distancing, with gatherings limited to 10 people or less, and most businesses like schools, daycares, and bars remaining closed. All non-essential travel would remain prohibited. In the second phase, gatherings would be capped at 50 people, and while business could reopen, all employers able to engage in telework are encouraged to do so. Phase three would see the unrestricted return of all employees to work, with new cases being isolated and good hygiene being emphasized.

Political News and Notes

Businesses Reward First Responders

One of the nation's largest drugstore chains, Walgreens, has designated April 25th as Frontline Heroes Discount Day. This recognition will provide a 30% discount on all Walgreens brands and 20% discount on national brands. Police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, physicians, nurses, and any other frontline or healthcare team employees are eligible. Walgreen's show of gratitude has been echoed by some other businesses, like Giant Eagle, Sam's Club, and Costco, which have designated hours reserved for frontline responders to shop.

Ohio's Growing Unemployment Problem

Latest data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services tells that the unemployment rate for March reached 5.5%, up from 4.1% in February. An increase of nearly 75,000 employees this month to the standing 241,000 brings the Ohio total to 314,000. National data has followed suit, with the unemployment rate rising from 3.5% in February to 4.4% for March. While the number of claims for unemployment compensation is declining from previous weeks both statewide and nationally, Ohio did surpass six figures in the number of initial claims made last week, for the fourth consecutive week. Despite concern over the fund's solvency and processing delays, the Governor has reassured that every measure will be taken to guarantee claims.

This Week's Bills

HB 609 - Tax Amnesty: To require the Tax Commissioner to administer a temporary amnesty program from August 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, with respect to delinquent state taxes and fees, and to repeal Section 1 of this act on January 1, 2021.

HB 610 - Crime Victims: To make changes relative to the rights of crime victims.

SB 302 - EMS Services: Regarding emergency medical services and stroke patient protocols.