



April 8, 2020

SENATE RETURNS TO CAPITOL TO ADDRESS COVID-19 FUNDING

This week, I joined my colleagues in Jefferson City as we reconvened for the first time since leaving the Capitol on March 12. Yesterday, the Senate Appropriations Committee met to consider a supplemental budget bill. The bill includes funding for Missouri's response to the COVID-19 virus. Recently, Congress passed and the president signed the CARES Act, which included more than \$2 billion in additional COVID-19 relief funds to our state. The governor is not able to spend this money until it is appropriated by the Legislature.

The money Missouri receives from the federal government will address short-term needs, such as personal protective equipment for health care workers and first responders, as well as funding for additional medical facilities, if needed. The federal COVID-19 relief legislation funds temporary housing for health care workers who are unable to return home and risk transmitting the virus to their own families, and provides assistance to cities and local K-12 schools. Today, the full Senate passed changes to the supplemental budget to reflect these federal developments and sent our version to the House of Representatives for its consideration.

STATEWIDE STAY-HOME ORDER

The governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order that became effective on Monday. All Missourians are asked to remain home, except to conduct essential activities, such as going to work at an essential business, purchasing groceries or to going outside to exercise.

“Essential businesses” are defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. A full list of essential businesses can be found [HERE](#). Businesses not deemed essential may remain open, so long as they limit occupancy to 10 people or less and follow social distancing guidelines. The governor’s order also includes occupancy guidance for retail businesses. Stores, including grocery stores, are required to limit the number of customers inside based on square footage.

Meanwhile, stay-home orders issued by the Platte County Health Department and the cities of St. Joseph and Kansas City remain in effect. More information about Missouri’s stay-at-home order and how it affects businesses can be found at the Missouri Department of Economic Development’s website, www.ded.mo.gov.

HELP FOR UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

The Missouri Department of Labor released additional information about supplemental unemployment benefits provided by the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) provision of the CARES Act. The federal law supplements state unemployment payments by an additional \$600 each week. The FPUC supplement will be effective beginning March 29 and will be added to claims filed on or after that date. The increased payments should appear as early as April 12 and will continue through July 25.

Self-employed individuals and some other wage earners who don’t normally qualify for unemployment insurance will receive assistance through a different CARES Act provision, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. This new program is complex and the Missouri Department of Labor is still updating its system to incorporate it. In the meantime, some Missourians have had PUA unemployment claims denied. We have raised these issues with the department and have been assured they will be addressed.

For more information about unemployment insurance, visit www.labor.mo.gov. The site provides answers to questions frequently asked by employers and those facing job loss. With the department experiencing unprecedented call volume, please consider using the department’s website to avoid long hold times and busy signals.

LOANS & GRANTS FOR SMALL BUSINESS

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) offers a relief program to assist businesses affected by COVID-19. Most businesses with fewer than 500 employees qualify for the SBA’s Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The PPP covers up to eight weeks of payroll expenses. Businesses may borrow 2.5 times their average monthly payroll costs. The loans do not have to be paid back if the money is used to pay salaries, wages, rent, mortgage interest or utility costs. The interest on any portion of the loan that is not forgiven is just 1 percent. Applications for PPP loans are being accepted now through local lenders, so contact your bank for details. For more information about SBA programs, visit www.sba.gov.

PROTECTING EACH OTHER

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends Americans wear cloth face masks when in public. The CDC website, www.cdc.gov, offers guidance on making suitable masks at home.

The COVID-19 situation changes rapidly. Please watch my Facebook page and Twitter feeds for the latest developments. If you have questions or need assistance, email me at tony.luetkemeyer@senate.mo.gov or call my office at (573) 751-2183.