

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF DECEMBER 14, 2020

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced today that high schools and some other businesses will be able to reopen on Monday, while the ban on indoor dining will remain in place through January 15.

High Schools will be able to reopen after their winter break. Other businesses that can open, albeit with safety restrictions, include: casinos, theaters, bowling alleys, indoor entertainment venues, and stadiums.

Restrictions on opening these businesses include:

- Open without concessions
- Total capacity limited to 100 people within any distinct space within the venue
- Total capacity for stadiums and arenas hosting sporting events is 250
- Indoor entertainment venue

Indoor dining in restaurants could remain closed until January 15, unless the COVID cases stabilize or go down, and then it could be lifted earlier. The restrictions are in place as part of a continuation of the Department of Health and Human Services order that began on Nov. 18 to help slow the spread of the virus. The continuation also includes restricting indoor gatherings to 10 people and two households.

DHHS SETS COVID VACCINE PRIORITIES BASED ON FEDERAL GUIDANCE

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services announced guidelines and a COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard for residents to track information about the vaccine.

The department is basing its priorities and distribution on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, which are based on input from a federal advisory committee, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. As of this week, MDHHS has released the following phases, with the acknowledgement that the priorities might change as the state gets further federal guidance:

- **Phase 1A** includes paid and unpaid persons serving in health care settings who have direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials and are unable to work from home, as well as residents of long-term care facilities.
- **Phase 1B** includes workers in essential and critical industries, including workers with unique skill sets such as non-hospital or non-public health laboratories and mortuary services.

- **Phase 1C** includes people at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness due to underlying medical conditions, and people 65 years and older.
- **Phase 2** is a mass vaccination campaign for all individuals 16 years and older

Vaccination in one phase may not be complete before vaccination in another phase begins. Also, the vaccine requires two doses.

The state will distribute the vaccine over a series of weeks, and current plans to have enough vaccine by late Spring 2021 for everyone who is recommended to receive it. In addition, there is no out-of-pocket costs for people receiving the vaccine, but healthcare providers can bill insurance for administrative costs.

The Michigan COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard and other COVID-19 related information can be found at Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine.

HOUSE, SENATE AND WHITMER CONTINUE COVID SUPPLEMENTAL SPENDING BILL NEGOTIATIONS

The Michigan House and Senate along with Governor Gretchen Whitmer are engaging in ongoing negotiations today to decide on a spending plan related to providing COVID relief.

Senate Republicans announced their version of a “supplemental relief package,” without specific funding amounts on Thursday. The Senate was planning on being in session today at 10 a.m.

Gongwer is reporting that sources have said the House and Senate agreed to less than \$300 million spending bill to provide COVID-19 relief and Gov. Whitmer’s office is reviewing it.

The House met on Thursday from 10 a.m. until after midnight and will meet Monday at 8 a.m. to concur any potentially passed legislation.

The Senate statement said spending would go toward: expanding testing and vaccine distribution, helping hospitals and nursing homes address their shortage of nurses, including an extension of the pay increase for direct care worker; and provide assistance to businesses and furloughed or laid-off workers.

Senate Bill 604 extends the duration of unemployment benefits from 20 weeks to 26 weeks until March 31, 2021. The bill was sent back to the Senate from the House in order to send final version for the House to concur if an agreement is announced.

COVID PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR BUSINESSES HEADS TO GOVERNOR’S DESK
 Legislation that would waive fees, penalties and interest on unpaid summer property taxes from this year was passed by the House this week 60-43 and is headed for Gov. Whitmer’s signature. The House passed a changed version of SB 943. The bill is supported by businesses including the Small Business Association of Michigan as a way for the state to provide support to small businesses affected by COVID-19.

Whitmer vetoed legislation earlier this year that dealt with property tax relief for businesses.

GRANHOLM NAMED FOR ENERGY SECRETARY

President-elect Joe Biden has selected former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm to serve as secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy in his administration. Granholm will need to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate before beginning the role.

Granholm wrote on Twitter: "I'm honored that President-elect @joeBiden has placed his faith in me as his Energy Secretary nominee. We have an opportunity to build back better while creating millions of jobs — we can do it!"

Since leaving her role as Governor in 2011 following two terms, Granholm, a Democrat, has hosted her own cable television program, became a panelist on CNN and is a prominent supporter of Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden.

MM&A Briefs

Kolb Leaving Budget Office – Headed to U-M

Michigan's Budget Director Chris Kolb is leaving his position for a five-year appointment as the new vice president government relations at the University of Michigan. Kolb will succeed Cynthia Wilbanks who is retiring.

Michigan's Deputy Budget Director Kyle Jen also announced his leave earlier this week. He will be joining Oakland County Executive Director Dave Coulter's administration.

Wayne County Sheriff Napoleon, 65, Dies of COVID-19

Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon died this week from COVID-19 complications. He was 65. Napoleon served as sheriff since 2009. He was appointed to the position to replace now Wayne County Executive Warren Evans who became the Detroit police chief at the time. Napoleon earned about 75 percent of the vote when running for re-election in 2012.

Macomb County Politician Sal Rocca Dies at 74

Former Macomb County Representative Sal Rocca passed away this week at the age of 74, of COVID-19. Rocca led a 40-year political dynasty – starting the tradition of a Rocca family member being in the Legislature almost continuously (except for 1981-82) from 1975-20018.

He served in the House from 1975-80, 1983-94, and from 2001-4. He was then succeeded in the House from 1995-2000 by his wife, Sue Rocca, and in 2004, his son won the seat and held it until 2010. Tory Rocca also went on to the Senate.

Until 1992, for his first seven terms, Rocca served as a Democrat, changing parties to Republican in 1992 on the day of the deadline to file for the August primary.