

Gov. Kemp eases more restrictions on dining and live venues

ATLANTA - Governor Brian Kemp issued a new executive order Thursday as he continued to ease COVID-19 related restrictions. It allows spectator sports and live performance venues to reopen and conventions to resume on July 1, subject to some restrictions.

Kemp signed the 40-page-order Thursday, just before an earlier and more restrictive order was to expire. The new order, allowed under the health care emergency authority granted Kemp by lawmakers, runs through the end of June.

Effective immediately, Georgians 65-year-old or older are no longer required to shelter in place. Exceptions apply to those who have certain underlying medical conditions or live in a nursing home.

Beginning June 16, professional sports teams and organizations are required to follow the rules and guidelines mandated by their individual leagues. Meanwhile, High school and collegiate teams and organizations must abide by the guidelines set by their conferences or associations.

Gathering of 50 people or more are prohibited unless there is a minimum of 6 feet between each person, beginning June 16. Exceptions apply to critical infrastructure entities, incidental or transitory groupings, or cohabitating individuals.



Starting June 16, there is no longer a maximum number of people who can sit together or limit to the number of people inside per square foot at restaurants.

Beginning July 1, live performance venues across Georgia are allowed to reopen for business if it complies with specific criteria.

Also on July 1, conventions are allowed to be held if it meets twenty-one specific requirements.

Kemp previously renewed a state of emergency for the state of Georgia on May 28. The declaration helped to free-up resources in order to quickly continue to respond to the pandemic. The renewed declaration will expire at 11:59 p.m. on July 12.

Georgia has had more than 54,000 confirmed cases of the virus, according to data from the state Department of Public Health. Over 2,300 people in the state have died.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Kemp said that using common sense and following health advice, including social distancing and wearing masks, will allow Georgians to get out of their homes safely and help spur the economy. He said people should patronize businesses that follow health restrictions and sanitation guidelines.

State leaders and health officials say they are concerned about what impact recent protests over the death of George Floyd will have on Georgia's efforts to fight COVID-19.

The counties with the highest number of cases continue to be in metro Atlanta with Fulton County topping 5,000 cases and more than 270 deaths with Gwinnett County following with 4,900 cases and 150 deaths. These two counties have also seen some of the largest protests over the last few days with fears a second spike might come from the large gatherings.

Georgia was one of the first states in the nation to allow businesses including tattoo parlors and bowling alleys to reopen in late April, despite warnings from public health experts that the move was too soon.