

VT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

APRIL 15, 2020 COVID-19 UPDATE

Dear Friends,

Our office is receiving an unprecedented number of constituent calls and emails from Vermonters who are desperate, anxious, and frankly in disbelief that the unemployment insurance system is as broken as it is. People are running out of money and they need to know when they can expect help.

It is unacceptable that four weeks after folks were laid off, so many still have not received their UI compensation. We've heard from people who are at their wits end, indicating they are down to their last \$30 for groceries and do not know what they are going to do.

Today, I sent a [letter](#) to Commissioner Harrington recognizing this is an unprecedented and extremely stressful time for all State Agencies. I commended him for putting the Virtual Town Halls together (see sidebar). But people need more than information at this point. They need money to put food on the table, pay their rent, or mortgage and utilities. The state is not allowing evictions, but we are also requiring people to pay their obligations. It is time for the state to pay our obligation as well.

Farmers Markets

On April 10, the Agency of Ag put out guidance which shuts down Vermont farmers markets. You can read the guidance [here](#).

Our office has received a lot of contact from farmers and those who rely on local food who are concerned that farmers markets are not permitted to operate under current guidance.

I am a farmer who operates at farmers market and am aware of the economic and social challenges presented by the current guidance from the Agency of Ag. We have worked with NOFA and the Vermont Farmers Market Association and understand they've put out a detailed [proposal for safe operation of markets](#).

Yesterday I sent a [letter](#) to Anson Tebbetts, Secretary of Agriculture, encouraging him to move quickly to a guidance that allows farmers markets to operate with proper protective protocols and to allow our small rural businesses to survive as well as provide food for their neighbors."

Health & Safety Tips for Essential Businesses

The VT Dept. of Health has just come out with [COVID-19 Health & Safety Tips for Essential Businesses](#)

You can also find new guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19 for managers and owners of [apartment complexes](#) and [senior living communities](#) at healthvermont.gov/covid19-groupliving. The guidance calls for making a plan, preparing common spaces and communicating with residents/staff, in addition to outlining the role of the Health Department.

FACEBOOK LIVE UPDATES

Join us for regular updates on what the State is doing to help Vermonters during the COVID-19 pandemic at these Facebook Live Events. Go to: www.facebook.com/VTLtGov/ to tune in.

Thurs, April 16, 10:30 AM
Sat., April 18, 10:30 AM
Tues., April 21, 10:30 AM
Thurs, April 23, 10:30 AM

Unemployment Ins. Virtual Town Halls

Thurs, April 16, 8:30 AM: Claimant 101
[Dept of Labor Website](#)

Thurs, April 16, 2:00 PM: Employee Safety and Workers' Compensation Amid COVID-19
[Dept of Labor Website](#)

During this time of spatial distancing, you can:

- Take a walk
- Take a virtual exercise class
- Catch up on reading
- Check in on family and friends

Let us know what else you are doing.

If you find this newsletter helpful, please feel free to forward it on and let people know they can sign up to receive future newsletters and updates at www.lt.gov.vermont.gov

Expedited Temporary Licenses for Health Professionals

The Health Department announced recently that [health professionals can quickly become temporarily licensed](#) to provide care during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The new emergency measures grant a temporary license for health professionals who:

- Are licensed and in good standing in other states
- Were licensed in Vermont, but whose licenses lapsed in recent years

Volunteers are still needed

Please consider signing up to volunteer to support the state's response to COVID-19:

<https://vermont.gov/volunteer>. If you have medical and healthcare skills, please consider signing up for the Medical Reserve Corp (MRC). Other volunteers are needed to help keep foodbanks stocked, deliver meals, and help their communities.

SBA Loans and Emergency Advances

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development is encouraging small business owners to consider applying for an [Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#). By applying for a loan, a business harmed by COVID-19 may be eligible for a grant that provides an emergency advance of up to \$10,000 within three days of a successful application. This resource is available to businesses now, and you can access it by reaching out directly to the SBA and filling out [an application on their website](#) or by reaching out to your [Regional Development Corporation](#), or the [Vermont Small Business Development Center](#).

The VT Dept. of Labor has set up a landing page with information on benefits coming out of the **Federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act**:

https://labor.vermont.gov/CARESact_Vermont, and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development has set up the following resource page: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19>, with “resources for business,” “resources for individuals,” and “resources of communities” sections.

[The Small Business Owner's Guide to the CARES Act](#)

Public Wifi

Recently, a constituent reached out about the **availability of internet access** in rural Vermont for families now working remotely and homeschooling their children. She brought an important resource to our attention: The Vermont Department of Public Service has put together a [comprehensive map](#) of buildings, including libraries, schools and town offices, where there is publicly available Wifi. The sites are accessible at all hours from a parked vehicle on the road or parking lot. This could be a great help to families struggling to connect. Please spread the word! **The map is available [here](#)**

And lastly, if you're looking for a way to help your neighbors who may be less fortunate, please consider a donation an organization on the front lines of Covid-19 Relief, something we're calling Stimulus package: Vermonters Pay it Forward

Fellow Vermonters, if, when you receive your stimulus check, it feels more like a windfall than a lifeline, consider donating it to someone struggling to make ends meet or a reputable nonprofit organization and let them “stimulate the economy.” It's the right thing to do.

Here is a list of some of the organizations that are on the front lines:

- [Green Mountain United Way](#)
- [Capstone Community Action](#)
- [The Vermont Community Foundation](#)
- [The Vermont Food Bank](#)
- [Meals on Wheels](#)

Things are changing by the hour. We are here to help answer questions during this chaotic and uncertain time. Please reach out with questions and we will try to answer them as fast as we possibly can.

