

VT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

May 21, 2020 COVID-19 UPDATE

Dear Friends,

Since mid-March the legislature has been working exclusively on bills related to the Covid-19 crisis. Now that initial emergency legislative adjustments for the pandemic has let up, the Senate is working on the bills that predate the crisis, while also continuing with Covid issues as they arise. In addition, the Senate must pass a budget bill to fund the first quarter of the fiscal year, which starts July 1. The legislature normally is adjourned for the year by mid-May but this is not a normal year. We are currently in session four days a week and likely will be for the next several weeks.

One bill that I am happy to report just passed is S.337 which allows the state's electric efficiency utilities — Efficiency Vermont and Burlington Electric Department — to spend up to \$2 million over the next three years on heating and transportation efficiency projects. This will create jobs and save Vermonters money. This is important as transportation and heating now account for 80% of Vermonters' energy costs and contribute to climate change pollution.

Another important bill, S.243, establishes an Emergency Service Provider Wellness Commission. The bill provides for a council of public safety, fire, EMS, and others to ensure that counseling and related services are available to maintain the health of those first on the scene to help us. "Vermont's dedicated first responders give our communities strength in times of crisis. First responders told us how important a support system is to them - to recover from physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging work," said Ginny Lyons, Chair of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee.

HEROES FUNDING

I am grateful for the U.S. House's passage of the HEROES Act on Friday. This act will provide critical emergency financial assistance to working families, states and local governments.

Yesterday I sent a letter to Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders and Congressman Welch, thanking them for their tireless efforts to address our current public health and economic crisis. I asked them to prioritize three specific issues in Federal assistance: **Increasing Direct Emergency Payments to Working Families, Assistance to Local Government, and Reforms to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)**. We hope that an extension will be granted to businesses that are unable to open, or need to open in very limited ways, in order to maximize loan forgiveness. Current guidance says that in order to receive maximum loan forgiveness, businesses must

FACEBOOK LIVE UPDATES

**THURSDAY,
MAY 21, 10:30**

**TUESDAY,
MAY 26, 11:30**

**THURSDAY,
MAY 28, 10:30**

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.

Tuesday, June 2, 11 AM

Attending Virtual Statewide Independent Living Council-sponsored Olmstead Summit

Thursday, June 4, 7 AM

Live on 'The Morning Drive with Kurt and Marcus,' WVMT 93.6 FM or 620 AM

Friday, June 5, 4:00 PM

Speaking at Virtual Accomplished Teacher Reception

Tuesday, June 9, 3-4:30

Participating Slow Living Summit Policy Panel, Ag Policy in a Time of Uncertainty

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

document the payroll and other expenses during the “covered period” which is 8 weeks from the date of the loan. You can read my full letter [here](#).

Working Lands Grants Available

The Working Lands Enterprise Board has launched a one-time grant program called [COVID-19 Response Business Development Grants](#). Funding is available for agriculture and forestry businesses to maintain operations while increasing capacity to rebuild and/or recover during an unprecedented time of need. Available funds total \$180,000 and eligible grants will be awarded within the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000. The [application](#) period closes on May 31, 2020.

Resources for Families from the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

For families coping with COVID-19, constituent Russell Himmelstein compiled these [resources](#) for children, adolescents, and families.

They were recently mentioned on the CNN/Sesame Street Town Hall for Kids.

Thank you for supporting quality mental health care. As you know, children's mental health remains vitally important, especially during the pandemic.

Last week we saw an unprecedented number of Vermonters show up for the **Farmers to Families food distribution** in Berlin. This is a terribly trying time for everyone. The economic impact of the stay home, stay safe order has been particularly hard on working class Vermonters, independent business operators and many in the hospitality industry. I continue to be frustrated with the lack of progress on resolving the Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment (PUA) challenges that Vermonters are facing. Additionally, it was very distressing to hear that some Vermonters' complete social security numbers were inadvertently compromised. This is not acceptable. No one should be going hungry and no one should have their SS#/private information revealed.

Please contact my office if you are in a situation where you need help. Your Representatives, Senators and I are all working hard to try to help individuals as well as figure the best way forward to safely rebuild and reopen our state so that the need for food lines will diminish. For more information on future food distribution locations please go [here](#). Please also visit my [Facebook page](#) for recent updates with many links in the comments section for help for individuals, businesses, visitors, camping, and so many other constantly changing parameters of the state orders.

We need to continue to be careful. We still must keep physical distance, wear masks, wash hands and watch out for the vulnerable.

Stay safe,

