

Virginia General Assembly



March 31, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor's Office
1111 E Broad St
Richmond VA 23219-1934

Dear Governor Northam:

With your decision yesterday to issue Executive Order 55, the lives and livelihoods of all Virginians have been changed for the immediate future. We write to ask that you consider taking measures now to ensure the hardships resulting from actions intended to prevent the further spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) are neither compounded nor prolonged.

As our citizens and businesses must directly contend with the effects of the restrictions placed on movement, commerce, and income, we reiterate the request we made in our letter of March 19 to amend or veto all bills that will exacerbate their already substantial burden. Legislation approved during the regular session that increased taxes or fees, added regulation, or placed new limits on free commerce and economic growth should either be vetoed or amended with a reenactment clause. Additionally, the Department of Taxation should act to replicate the decisions related to filing deadlines, penalties, and interest made by the Internal Revenue Service.

Provided the June 10 expiration of Executive Order 55 remains operative, most of Virginia's economy will have been shut down for a three-month period. With a profoundly negative effect on anticipated state revenues inevitable, it would be fiscally reckless to enact House Bills 29 and 30 without extensive revisions reflecting the expected shortfall. As the April 11 deadline for amending the 2018-2020 and 2020-2022 Biennial Budgets is now less than two weeks away, we urge you to submit amendments that accurately reflect our new fiscal reality. By using the 2018-2020 Biennial Budget – as originally enacted in 2018 – as a baseline, we could significantly minimize the disruptions to the Commonwealth and its citizens resulting from the current suspension of economic activity.

In our letter of March 19, we also noted, "Some accounting for the differences in geographic regions of the commonwealth might aid greatly in limiting the economic effects in already distressed areas." While we agree that no Virginian should consider themselves immune from the Coronavirus, we ask that you take these geographic differences into account – especially if future guidelines issued by the White House Coronavirus Task Force differentiate risk levels by county.

We would appreciate some further explanation as to your reasoning behind the selection of June 10 as the expiration of Executive Order 55. As that Wednesday is 41 days later than the April 30 deadline recommended by the White House Coronavirus Task Force and one day after Virginia's June 9 Primary, your choice has struck us as curious.

In our letters to you of March 19 and 23, we expressed our readiness to offer assistance and counsel as you consider measures to ensure the health of the people of Virginia. Although you have not yet availed yourself of our offer, we sincerely hope you will look upon our caucus as a potential partner and resource. A collaborative, inclusive, and bipartisan approach to governing has served Virginia exceptionally well over the last half century. It can also serve Virginia well as we confront the most severe public health crisis this century.

We genuinely appreciate your continued efforts to protect the health of Virginians.

Very truly yours,



Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Republican Leader



Ryan T. McDougle
Republican Caucus Chairman



Mark D. Obenshain
Republican Caucus Co-Chairman



William M. Stanley, Jr.
Republican Caucus Whip



Bryce E. Reeves
Republican Caucus Whip



Stephen D. Newman
Republican Leader Pro-Tempore