

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Governor Little signs new executive orders, proclamation to further position Idaho to overcome coronavirus challenge

Boise, Idaho – Governor Brad Little’s latest executive orders and proclamation will boost funds available for Idaho’s coronavirus response, manage the impact of the crisis on the state budget, and help the thousands of Idahoans suddenly unemployed due to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

“The number of unemployed in Idaho jumped 1,200-percent in a matter of days,” Governor Little said. “These actions help people get the financial help they need as quickly as possible and provide more flexibility for businesses impacted by the sudden change in our economy in recent weeks.”

“I am also using my executive authority to make \$39.3 million available to aid in our state’s response to coronavirus,” Governor Little added. “I want to assure Idahoans that, although the state budget will be impacted, we have a plan to meet our constitutional requirement for a balanced state budget without having to raise taxes.”

Executive Order 2020-06 will direct the transfer of \$39.3 million to the Disaster Emergency Account, the maximum allowable amount under the law.

Governor Little thanked President Donald Trump and the U.S. Congress for bringing forth \$2 trillion to battle the harmful effects of the pandemic. It is anticipated Idaho will receive at least \$1.25 billion, and there will be targeted support including direct payments to Idahoans; lending funds for businesses; and an education stabilization fund for school districts and colleges, among other things.

The Governor’s executive order makes money available for the quick purchase of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, ventilators, rapid test kits, lab supplies, hospital beds and other critical needs. Although the new federal funds are likely to cover the expenses, the Governor’s action ensures Idaho does not have to wait on critical supplies.

Also, Governor Little signed Executive Order 2020-05 to reduce non-coronavirus related General Fund spending in the fiscal year by 1-percent, which will save approximately \$40 million statewide.

“The coronavirus situation has not only affected our daily lives and personal finances, but the state’s finances as well. While the impact of the pandemic on state revenue collection is yet unknown, it is going to have a significant impact and we must do everything we can to ensure the state is positioned for long-term success,” Governor Little said. “These actions are never easy, but I appreciate our agency directors and state employees who have done a tremendous job in managing through tough times and making sure we emerge stronger.”

Governor Little also signed a proclamation to help Idahoans who are temporarily unable to work through no fault of their own because of illness, quarantines, layoff or reduction of work related to coronavirus.

The Idaho Department of Labor announced Thursday that 13,341 new claims were filed for unemployment insurance benefits from Idaho workers laid off due to the coronavirus. That was up 12,310 from the previous week, for a 1,200-percent increase in just a matter of days.

For unemployment insurance claimants, the proclamation does the following things:

- Waives the one-week waiting period for all applicants who are otherwise eligible.
- Makes it easier for claimants to be considered as job-attached if they have been laid off due to COVID-19 related reasons. An employer must provide reasonable assurance of a return to work and the claimant must be able and available for suitable work.

- Considers claimants have met the available-for-work criteria if they are isolated and unavailable to work at the request of a medical professional, their employer, or their local health district and they will be returning to their employer.
- Provides parties an additional 14 days to appeal claims decisions beyond the normal 14 days.

For employers:

- Businesses who pay a quarterly unemployment tax will not be charged when employees are laid off due to coronavirus.
- Parties will be given an additional 14 days to appeal claims decisions beyond the normal 14 days.

The unemployment provisions are in effect as of March 8, 2020.

“I am sure everyone saw the news yesterday that Idaho had its first deaths resulting from coronavirus. Our prayers are with the families and loved ones of those who passed. This is a sad reminder that coronavirus can be extremely harmful or deadly to many, and we all must take personal responsibility and do everything we can to prevent the spread of coronavirus to others. Most importantly, people must stay home as much as possible for the next three weeks,” Governor Little said.