



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mayor Jacobs Delivers Proposal for Strategic, Phased Reopening

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs has created a detailed proposal for the strategic, phased reopening of businesses in Knox County.

“Gov. Lee’s decision to extend the Safer at Home Order was made taking statewide numbers into account,” said Mayor Jacobs. “Knox County is one of 95 Tennessee counties and as long as our community continues to make good and responsible choices, I believe we can, and should, start taking steps to reopen businesses. The longer the economy is shut down, the more difficult it’s going to be to get it back on track.”

In recent days, Mayor Jacobs crafted a three-page “Phased Reopening” proposal that he sent to Gov. Lee. The proposal outlines specific guidelines for opening businesses and, if adopted, would have most businesses fully operational within six weeks—barring any significant negative changes in COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The move comes as Knox County sees its active COVID-19 cases begin to stabilize. As of this morning, the county had 35 active cases.

Some of the Mayor’s proposed guidelines are key to all businesses. For example, businesses should: require sick employees stay home; continue to promote frequent handwashing and proper hygiene and respiratory etiquette; allow flexible hours; and consider the use of cloth face coverings if physical distancing isn’t a functional possibility.

Other guidelines specifically target venues, restaurants and bars, retail stores, personal appearance businesses and health clubs, parks and playgrounds.

Mayor Jacobs again is reminding residents that physical distancing won’t eradicate COVID-19, but rather slow its spread so that hospitals aren’t overwhelmed. As it stands, Knox County hospitals are mostly empty and many healthcare workers are being laid off or dispatched to hotspot areas, some out of state.

“It isn’t a choice between healthy people and a healthy economy, or it shouldn’t be. The general public doesn’t need the government ordering an economic shut down so people will stay home,” Mayor Jacobs said. “Those who are sick or in a high-risk category should make the choice to stay home or continue taking extreme precautions when leaving home. Everyone else should be able to return to work and take responsibility for making their own healthy choices.”

Further, the Mayor said he was disappointed to learn that elected leaders in other states have resorted to such severe measures that they've encouraged law enforcement to issue citations and health leaders to force mandatory quarantines.

In Kentucky, for example, the Governor issued an Executive Order against churches holding in-person services and directed law enforcement to record the license plate numbers of motorists over Easter Weekend. Mayors in some jurisdictions have gone as far as prohibiting drive-in services.

“We are working with the Knox County Health Department and Dr. Martha Buchanan to get guidelines in place to keep parishioners safe when our churches re-open, which we hope is sooner rather than later,” the Mayor said. “The pandemic is serious, and I certainly don't want to underestimate it, but we must strike a balance between safety and violating outright any constitutional rights granted by the First Amendment.”

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Attachment: [A draft of Mayor Jacobs' *Phased Reopening* proposed guidelines.](#)