



MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

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Mayor Jacobs Provides County Government Furlough Details

Knoxville, Tennessee—Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs announced last Friday a temporary eight-week furlough for county government employees would take place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mayor's proposed furloughs will not impact Knox County Schools as it specifically applies to Knox County's executive branch. Mayor Jacobs requested that all elected fee offices participate as well, however the Attorney General, Public Defender and Sheriff each opted out.

The county Human Resources and Benefits department, and the Regional Forensic Center, were exempted from issuing furloughs due to high demand on already overwhelmed staff.

Mayor Jacobs said the county waited as long as possible to enact the plan since it was going to have a very real impact on employee livelihoods, but at this difficult economic time the county must watch its spending.

"This was the hardest decision I've had to make since taking office," said Mayor Jacobs. "I am hopeful that by beginning to bring businesses back online things will turn around quickly. It is my intent to bring everyone back to work as soon as possible."

County general service operations—including engineering and public works, recreation, health/welfare, and libraries, among others—and the salaries of the people who provide the services make up the largest part of the county budget, and are funded through property and sales taxes on individuals and businesses. Businesses promoting tourism and economic activity in Knox County also fund the hotel/motel tax. Since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Knox and surrounding counties, revenues for these and other county budget funds have fallen below previous projections. In the best-case scenarios, sales tax revenues—the bulk of which support Knox County Schools—are expected to fall around \$7 million; worst-case scenarios estimate around \$18 million.

Furloughs are designed to help the county avoid permanent layoffs and stay mindful of budget limitations.

Mayor Jacobs can bring employees back before eight weeks. He can also extend the furloughs if revenues don't improve. As it stands, the furlough will affect 366 county employees in the fee offices and every executive branch department and may save Knox County up to an estimated \$1.73 million in payroll costs.

Furlough numbers are as follows:

- Executive Branch Departments: 264
 - o Libraries: 169
 - o Health Department: 26
 - o Engineering and Public Works: 22
 - o Veterans and Senior Services: 17
 - o Finance: 7
 - o Information Technology: 7
 - o Parks and Recreation: 7

- Procurement: 5
- Mayor's Office: 2
- Probation and Pretrial Release: 1
- Risk Management: 1
- Benefits: 0
- Regional Forensic Center: 0
- Human Resources: 0
- County offices: 102
 - Clerk: 20
 - Criminal Court Clerk: 19
 - Trustee: 19
 - Circuit Court Clerk :16
 - Property Assessor: 13
 - Register of Deeds: 11
 - Law Director: 3
 - Chancery Court: 1

Though they have already been notified, employees will continue working—and be paid—through May 8. Furlough will officially begin May 9. Impacted employees will continue to receive health coverage and other benefits from Knox County throughout furlough as well as up to \$275 per week from the State of Tennessee and \$600 from the federal government's Coronavirus Aid, Relieve and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for a total of up \$875 per week while unemployed.

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