May 6, 2020

There are reports that the White House plans to wind down the Coronavirus Task Force as the administration and state governors turn their attention to reopening the economy. A senior administration official told CNN that members of the task force will still be involved and in communication during the reopening phase, helping leaders as they reopen states and businesses. A second senior administration official told Axios, "Members of the Pence-led task force will continue providing input, though the group but will not be meeting in person as regularly as the focus changes toward vaccines, therapeutics, testing, and ultimately reopening the economy. Keep in mind the task force was always a temporary arrangement. Health experts will continue providing input even while not meeting together every day."

We continue to call on the U.S. Congress and the Trump administration to make a significant investment in infrastructure in order to support our industry and jumpstart the economy, and we are working with other industry groups and partner organizations and making the case in the news to amplify these efforts.

Today, AEM, as part of its work with the Rebuild Rural Coalition, sent a letter to congressional leadership, urging them to include provisions for infrastructure investment in upcoming relief packages. And yesterday, I spoke with Newsmax’s Shaun Kraisman and Emma Rechenberg about why Congress needs to put policy ahead of politics and make a significant investment in our nation’s infrastructure to drive the economic recovery.

As federal and state governments turn their attention to reopening, we have also compiled the latest and greatest on reopening plans into a presentation for your review.

Here are some of the day’s other developments:

**AEM, Rural Industry Orgs Tell Congressional Leadership to Invest in Rural Infrastructure**

Today, AEM joined more than 250 organizations associated with the Rebuild Rural Coalition on a letter to House and Senate leadership urging the inclusion of provisions to invest in infrastructure in upcoming COVID-19 relief packages. The letter urges Congress to give particular consideration in any legislation to rural communities as rural infrastructure needs like broadband and transportation infrastructure are vital to ensuring the economic viability of these areas. This letter complements AEM’s continued efforts to promote economic recovery
for equipment manufacturers and hardworking Americans through investment in our nation’s infrastructure.

**OSHA Publishes New Translations of Poster to Help Prevent Workplace Coronavirus Exposure**
The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has translated and published its “Ten Steps All Workplaces Can Take to Reduce Risk of Exposure to Coronavirus” poster in 11 additional languages. The poster highlights 10 infection prevention measures every employer should implement to protect workers’ safety and health during the pandemic.

**USDA to Purchase Another $470 Million in Ag Products**
In an effort to alleviate slumping demand for commodities, USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service will make additional bulk purchases of potatoes, chicken, cherries, sweet potatoes, pork, asparagus, pears, orange juice, dairy, seafood, catfish, prunes, strawberries, turkey, and raisins for distribution through food banks and other charitable organizations. Farm groups have applauded USDA’s work to find avenues for food to make it to Americans’ tables as the restaurant supply chain has fallen off dramatically during the COVID-19 shutdown.

**EIDL Grants, Loans Now Available to Farms**
The Small Business Administration (SBA) has announced that farm and other agricultural employers can apply for grants and low-interest, long-term loans through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza said SBA “has been prohibited by law from providing disaster assistance to agricultural businesses” for more than 30 years. However, “farmers, ranchers and other agricultural businesses will now have access to emergency working capital.”

**State Activities**
AEM has been monitoring activities taken by Governors as they continue to issue closure and reopening orders. We are in close contact with their staff to make the case that our industry is establishing health and safety protocols to protect both employees and customers. Notable for today’s update is that the Governor of Washington extended the closure order. The Governors of California, Kansas, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia announced the resumption of limited operations for certain businesses in the coming days, and the Governor of Illinois announced a phased plan to allow the resumption of businesses activities later in the month. The Governors of Kentucky, New York, and Pennsylvania released operating requirements and guidelines for reopening businesses.

**Now that state governments are transitioning into re-opening strategies, we are providing a new U.S. map showing when state shelter-in-place orders and stay-at-home advisories expire.**

For all of the latest information, please visit our dedicated state by state tracker.
Canada Activities
Yesterday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced important measures within agriculture programs. He also announced an investment of more than $252 million to support farmers, food businesses, and food processors who provide essential services to Canadians every day by ensuring a safe and reliable food supply.

Today’s updates from Canadian provinces include:

- **Ontario**: The province has announced it is extending its emergency orders until May 19. However, Premier Doug Ford also announced that over the course of the next week, all retail stores with a street entrance will be allowed to provide curbside pickup and delivery, as well as in-store payment and purchases at garden centres, nurseries, hardware stores and safety supply stores.

- **Prince Edward Island**: The province has announced the COVID-19 Agriculture Labour Support Initiative (ALSI) allows individuals who are interested in working on a farm to register with WorkPEI and be connected with agricultural businesses who have registered their job openings.

We continue to update our resources on Canadian activities on AEM’s COVID-19 resources page. You can also click here for the latest updates from Ottawa and all the provinces.
Do you have questions or need to get a hold of AEM’s Advocacy Team? E-mail our Response Team at responseteam@aem.org with any questions or feedback.

As always, if you have any questions about AEM’s ongoing efforts, need assistance with a specific issue, or would like to share how the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic is impacting your business, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at keideberg@aem.org.

Best,
-Kip

Kip Eideberg
Senior Vice President, Government & Industry Relations
Association of Equipment Manufacturers