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## April 1, 2021

- I. State Issues
- II. Federal Issues
- III. 2020 Annual League Conference
- IV. Also of Interest

**Municipal Clerks:** Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body and Department Heads.

To assist in providing guidance and information we have created a [COVID-19 resource page](#). We will continue to update the page as we get pertinent information and include announcements in our Daily Updates.

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## I. State Issues

### a. COVID-19 Weekly Update

The Governor this week announced increased outdoor gathering limits and a new COVID-19 vaccine appointment finder. He also discussed the latest modeling from the Department of Health.

In regards to the Department of Health modeling, the Governor highlighted the moderate case scenario and high case scenario. But he noted that these are projections and not certainties. Further, he said that through behaviors such as social distancing, wearing masks, and getting vaccinated, the trajectory of the models can change. Based on the moderate case scenario, the State would hit high daily new cases and hospitalization on April 18 and would not anticipate seeing daily cases drop below 3,000 until middle of June at the earliest. Based on the high case scenario, the State would hit high daily cases of more than 8,000 daily in mid-May and again in mid-June. Hospitalizations would continue to increase through April before holding in a range of 3,500 from mid-May through mid-June.

## COVID Data for April 1, 2021:

- 4,699 new positive cases for a total of 804,037 confirmed cases
- 30 new confirmed deaths for a total of 22,023 confirmed deaths
- The rate of transmission is at 1.08
- 1,002 cases linked to 221 school outbreaks since August 2020
- 4,350,920 vaccine doses have been administered, including 2,809,654 first doses and 1,630,837 second doses. 47% have been Moderna, 51% Pfizer, and 2% J&J.

## Vaccine Information

The Governor announced a new COVID-19 vaccine appointment finder. This appointment finder aggregates information across multiple scheduling platforms, multiple times an hour, for vaccine appointments. The page is currently in beta and a work in progress but is available to the public. The [beta version is available](#) to the public.

As previously reported, starting April 5 New Jersey will expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to people ages 55 and older, as well as people 16 and older if they have intellectual or developmental disabilities. Sanitation workers, utility workers, librarians, library support staff, higher education educators and support staff, communications, IT, press, real estate, building, home service workers, retail financial institution workers, and laundry service workers are also eligible for vaccines.

CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid continue to reserve appointments for prioritizing educators and childcare workers. The State has also set aside a minimum of 10,000 doses each week for seniors aged 65 and older with Walmart. The State's call center has been reaching out to seniors on the waiting list to help them make an appointment.

The State hotline, (855) 568-0545 continues to assist residents, with live agents from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., in getting information on how to register, as well as how to schedule vaccine appointments as people become eligible. The agents remind residents that there is no out-of-pocket expense to get vaccinated and that the two vaccines are not interchangeable. The State continues to encourage the general public to pre-register for eligibility for the vaccine online. Individuals will be permitted to input their personal, contact, health insurance, and demographic information. Those who are immediately eligible based on screening questions will be able to schedule an appointment.

## Executive Orders

[Executive Order 234](#): Increases outdoor gathering limits and increases capacity for seated events at large venues effective 6:00 a.m. on Friday, April 2, 2021. For outdoor gatherings, general gathering limits increase from 50 to 200 people, college and youth sporting events will be permitted up to 200 spectators when the location can accommodate appropriate social distancing. Outdoor gatherings that are religious services or ceremonies, political events, weddings, funerals or memorial services will continue to not have any limits. Venues, including sports and entertainment venues with a seating capacity of 2,500 or more will be permitted to host events at 20% capacity indoors and 30% capacity outdoors. The capacity limits will continue to exclude participants, such as athletes and performers, and staff, such as coaches and ushers. The Executive Order also clarifies that banquet halls and similar dining establishments and venues that use a licensed caterer can host indoor celebrations and other private catered events at 35 % of

the room's capacity, up to 150 persons.

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## **b. Governor Signs Early Voting Legislation**

On March 30 Governor Murphy signed into law legislation establishing in-person early voting. [P.L. 2021, c. 40](#), which took effect immediately, permits registered voters to vote using machines at select designated polling places before the day of certain primary and general elections in New Jersey. For more, please see our [recent blog post](#).

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481, x112.

## **c. Local Part PERS Legislation Advances**

As we previously reported, legislation sponsored by Senate President Sweeney that would divide the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) into two parts: a State PERS for state employees and a Local PERS for all other employees ([S-3522](#)) awaits consideration by the full Senate. Please see our four-part blog series detailing the [board formation](#), [board operations](#), [board responsibilities](#), and [additional amendments to PERS](#).

The League supports the measure as it will protect local governing bodies from the State of New Jersey further directing property taxpayer dollars to its long mismanagement and underfunding of the pension systems, providing the new balanced board of trustees of PERS with the ability to determine or modify member benefits, direct policies and investments to achieve full funding, and serve as fiduciary of the system.

Please consider adopting the League's [sample resolution](#) expressing support and reaching out to your Senator and Assembly Representatives urging them to support this legislation to preserve the structure and integrity of the more solvent local part of the PERS.

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481, x112.

## **d. Cannabis Legalization Deadlines**

As we have previously reported, any municipal ordinances adopted prior to the February 22, 2021 adoption of [P.L. 2021, c. 16](#), prohibiting or limiting cannabis establishments are null and void. Municipalities have **until August 21, 2021**, 180 days from the signing of the legalization bills, **to enact an ordinance to opt-out of one**, all, or combination of cannabis establishments. Otherwise for five years, all cannabis licenses, except retail will become a permitted use in all industrial zones and retail establishments will become a conditional use in all commercial or retail zones.

If a municipality chooses to opt-out they do not need to wait five years to opt-in but, if the

municipality opts-in or takes no action they must wait five years before they can opt-out. Opt-out ordinances adopted after this initial five-year period are prospective only, meaning any cannabis establishment that began operating during this period will be permitted to continue operations, despite the change in local regulations.

On Thursday, March 18, we held a second free briefing on the new cannabis law. The briefing is now available for you to [view](#). For more information and resources on the new cannabis legislation, please visit the League's [cannabis resource page](#).

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**e. Division Issues Annual Financial Disclosure Statement Procedures**

The Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) issued [Local Finance Notice 2021-07](#) that outlines the filing procedure of the annual financial disclosure statements due on April 30. This notice is intended for municipal clerks, county clerks, and other local government entity representatives who have administrative responsibilities concerning roster maintenance for financial disclosure statements. In the coming weeks, a Local Finance Notice will be issued containing information for local government officers who must file the statement.

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**II. Federal Issues**

**a. American Rescue Plan Update**

The U.S. Treasury Department has 60 days to promulgate rules for the program and send federal aid directly to entitlement cities and to the state to be sent, unencumbered, to the municipalities within 30 days.

The League's partners at the National League of Cities sent a [letter to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen](#) outlining specific issues that need to be addressed so municipalities receive the aid without delay. Among those include are defining lost aid; water, and broadband infrastructure; and reporting and tracking requirements.

The League will share new information as it becomes available. In the meantime if you would like more information on the American Rescue Plan, please [view our March 12 American Rescue Plan briefing](#) or [March 11 blog post](#).

**Contact:** Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, [ppenna@njlm.org](mailto:ppenna@njlm.org), 609 695-3481, x110.

**b. American Jobs Plan**

Yesterday in a [speech in Pittsburgh](#), President Joe Biden [unveiled the American Jobs Plan](#), the first of two packages to rebuild the economy, infrastructure, and create jobs. It is estimated to cost \$2 trillion and the parameters includes improvements to roads, ports, bridges, broadband, electric infrastructure, manufacturing jobs, housing, public transit, freight rail, and water infrastructure as well as tax credits for climate change jobs. The plan is funded through various tax code changes, an increase in the global minimum corporate tax and an increase in in corporate tax rate.

Members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation have indicated that funding for the Gateway Project to replace the Portal North Bridge, fix the rail tunnels and construct two new tunnels under the Hudson River will be included in this proposal.

The second package will be unveiled in mid-April and is expected to focus on the challenges of health care costs, child care, paid leave, and education.

In Congress, there is significant disagreement on the size and cost of the package as well as the funding for it. Congress is expected to hold hearings on this proposal when they return from their district work period. The League will share new information as it becomes available.

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### **III. 2020 Annual League Conference**

#### **a. Print Your CEU Certificates from the 2020 NJLM Virtual Conference**

The tracking system from the 2020 NJLM Virtual Conference is now open. To print your certificates visit the [Tracking System webpage](#).

The system will be available until **May 1, 2021**.

#### **b. It's Not Too Late!**

We hope that the NJLM Virtual Conference allowed you to look back and forward on the challenges of the day, be it the COVID-19 pandemic, social and restorative justice or how to balance the competing interests in preparing for your 2021 budget. While we hope to be back in-person in Atlantic City in 2021, the virtual conference offers a unique benefit. The content of the approximately 80 programs and 145 virtual exhibitor booths will be available on-demand through October 31, 2021.

Anyone who is registered can simply log in to [the Conference website](#) to view any of the programs or visit any of the exhibitor booths. And for those who did not attend, it's not too late. We will continue to accept [registrations](#) for access to the Conference site. Those who register now will not be able to apply for CEUs but will have full access to all programs and exhibit booths. And please continue to visit the exhibitors who chose to support the 105<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference by stopping by their booths. You can contact exhibitors directly with any questions or comments by simply using the "Request Information" button on each booth. This will generate an automatic email to the exhibitor and they will contact you with a reply.

## IV. Also of Interest

### a. NJ Infrastructure Bank 2021 Webinar

The New Jersey Infrastructure Bank will be holding [webinars](#) on April 22, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and April 29, 2021 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The webinars will discuss program and financing changes coming in State Fiscal Year 2022 Program Financing Enhancements including utilization of WIFIA Program funds and introductions of blended interest rates as well as New Principal Forgiveness Loan Opportunities including small system lead remediation and harmful algal blooms.

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### b. Expanded Earned Income Tax Credit Program

On national Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day, the New Jersey Department of Treasury launched a statewide awareness campaign to encourage eligible taxpayers to take advantage of New Jersey's expanded program. Beginning with the 2020 tax filing New Jersey's Earned Income Tax Credit (NJEITC) is increasing to 40% of the federal credit an average of \$882 as well as lowering the minimum age eligibility for EITC from 25 to 21 years of age.

Treasury has created a wide range of [promotional materials that can be found online](#) for any partners looking to help raise awareness about the NJEITC. More information on NJEITC including eligibility is available at the New Jersey Earned Income Tax Credit [website](#).



New Jersey State League of Municipalities

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