



**South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, right, speaks at a COVID-19 briefing on Friday in West Columbia.**

# Stay-at-home order continues

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When will things get back to normal is the No. 1 question these days.

Gov. Henry McMaster has not provided any hints when he will lift the stay-at-home order or let diners inside restaurants, exercisers inside gyms and fans back in arenas.

No major reopening changes are planned when the governor renews his coronavirus emergency declaration for a third time on Monday.

McMaster, eager to restart a state economy that shed 340,000 jobs, has shown he is willing to ease certain restrictions when he feels the public is ready.

He lifted bans on retailers that were not at first considered “essential,” requiring owners to restrict the number of customers. He reopened public beach accesses and boat landings where law officers can enforce rules, including bans on gatherings of three or more people that threaten public health.

Additional bans could end once case numbers drop sharply over two weeks, the period the state’s top public health scientist would like to see before mass gatherings resume. That has not happened yet.

Still, there are signs that some normal — or close to normal — activity will resume soon.

McMaster has said he has no plans to move the June 9 primary, which means in-person absentee voting must start in two weeks on May 11.

Later that week, Darlington Raceway

is expected to hold a spectator-less NASCAR race on May 17. (No changes are needed to allow the race since McMaster’s order permits employees inside the track, as well as other closed businesses.)

McMaster has pledged a measured approach to lifting bans in South Carolina. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp was rebuked by President Donald Trump for reopening businesses too fast.

McMaster said he spoke to Trump last week, who told him “we’re doing an excellent job in South Carolina.”

## Schools closed for rest of term

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Governor McMaster announced on April 22nd that schools across South Carolina will remain closed through the rest of the school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Governor McMaster thanked educators around the state for their efforts to keep up with educational standards and students well-being during this time.

“It has been remarkable to see the effort that has been made, the highly remarkable effort,” McMaster said.

He also praised the meal programs that the districts have set up to feed students during the closures announcing that five million students have been fed since the programs began.

McMaster said that he wanted to thank all of the people who are involved in keeping our schools running during the closures.

He also thanked the parents for their efforts in helping their children learn from home.

State Superintendent Molly Spearman reiterated McMaster’s sentiment thanking everyone for their efforts during these difficult times.

“It has been a burden and it has been sad to see school closed, but it has been a joy to see how everyone has pulled together on this to work for the good of our children,” Spearman said.

Spearman also said that schools will continue to operate as they have for the entire closure.

She said that education will continue throughout the rest of the year even though buildings are closed.

“Our buildings will not open for the rest of the year, but learning will continue,” Spearman said.

Dorchester District 2 Superintendent Joseph Pye released a statement to the seniors in his district stating that no one could have seen this situation coming at the beginning of the school year.

“For many, 2020 began with a clear vision toward the finish line, but the line quickly blurred as the COVID-19 pandemic spread. We know you have missed many important celebrations and deserved recognitions of achievement, which you have anticipated for weeks, months, and even years in many cases,” Pye said.

He said many students were concerned about the possibility of not holding graduation ceremonies however he went onto explain that on July 17 Dorchester District 2 will hold graduation ceremonies in the North Charleston Coliseum as long as it is lawful to do so.

The class of 2020 will also be honored by a local radio station with a day long celebration of each school during the first two weeks of June.

“We applaud you for continuing to work toward fulfilling your graduation requirements as you conclude your K-12 education.

Stay engaged in learning activities during our school closures, continue to connect with your teachers and friends, and spend this valuable time with your families finding new ways to bond with one another,” Pye said to the Class of 2020.

District and school leaders in the

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## Local jobless number climbs



Food pick-up outside of the Summerville Family YMCA. The effort is organized by the Community Resource Center.

MATT BIASE/JOURNAL SCENE

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Recent numbers from the State Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) shows that in the past five weeks there have been 341,790 claims for unemployment.

That means in a little more than a month, 14 percent of the state’s labor force went jobless.

The only good news to be mined is that, based on numbers from DEW, during the week ending April 18, 73,116 people filed an initial claim for unemployment, that is a decrease of 14,570 claims from the previous week. It’s the first decline in claims since mid-March.

Work at the agency’s call centers

increased by 856%. DEW, announced that so far the agency has paid out \$351 million in both state unemployment and money from the federal CARES Act, that includes an additional \$600 per eligible claimant. But for a lot of people it’s not enough.

“What we are seeing is an increase for food, basic food,” said Lewis Smith, Executive Director of the Community Resource Center in Summerville.

Smith organizes a weekly food pick-up for those in need and the number of people showing up continues to grow. “They never thought they would be in a line like this but they are here,” he said.

Smith said there has been so much need that there had to be a change

in venue because of the volume. With cooperation from the Summerville Family YMCA and help from the Dorchester County Sheriff’s Office and the Summerville Police Department, the food pick-ups are now being done in the YMCA’s parking lot.

At the pick-up on April 20, vehicles were already snaked around outside of the lot onto the front street before it even started. Lewis said the week before they served about 500 vehicles.

“We have been doing it at our center right around the corner but our infrastructure just couldn’t handle this type of traffic,” he said. “People are coming more and more and more.”

Both the Summerville Police De-

partment and the Dorchester County Sheriff’s Office has been working to store and deliver the much needed food to the site. There is enough food in each box to last for three days.

“He [Lewis] just let us know one day they he needed some help moving this food and directing traffic,” said Dorchester County Sheriff L.C. Knight. “I think this is a very good thing he is doing because as you see, a lot people are needing help they are coming through the line quite frequently here and I’m just proud to be a part of it.”

Lewis also holds food drives to help supply the weekly pick-ups on Saturday’s at the Community Resource Center at 116 W. 2nd N. Street, in Summerville.

## Candidates, poll workers prep for primaries

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The June Primaries and Runoffs are weeks away in South Carolina with multiple congressional and state house races taking place as well as Dorchester County Sheriff, County Council and Berkeley County Council.

While recent elections were postponed in other areas due to the threat of COVID-19, the primary election is still on schedule for June 9 with the runoffs scheduled for June 23.

On election day, voters will choose between competing candidates of the same party prior to the general election in November when successful candidates will face off against challengers from the opposing political party or from an independent party.

The global pandemic will change the way Lowcountry residents fulfill their civic duty to vote.

It is likely that this primary election will look different than any other as voters and poll workers take extra

precautions to keep safe. Some polling places will not be available and some poll managers have declined to serve for health reasons.

Election officials are asking voters to check their polling place before voting.

The State Election Commission, along with individual county election officials are taking steps to make polling places as safe as possible for voters and poll managers. These are some of the measures they are taking:

Managers will receive special training on sanitizing surfaces and applying social distancing concepts.

Managers will be equipped with masks, face shields and gloves.

Managers will be provided with sanitizing wipes and will regularly clean common surfaces throughout the day.

Check-in stations and voting equipment will be spaced to keep voters and managers at least six feet apart.

Hand sanitizer will be provided for voters and managers.

Voters will be provided with a cot-

ton swab for making selections on the touchscreen.

Voters are asked to wear their own mask if they have one and to bring their own pen for signing the poll list.

Some community groups say these measures are not enough.

They are calling on state leaders to provide expanded opportunities for absentee voting, increase the time allowed for counting mailed-in ballots, and allow additional days for certifying election results.

Any person wishing to vote in the primaries and runoffs must register no later than May 8.

Voter registration by mail forms will be accepted if postmarked by May 11.

Some people qualify to vote by absentee ballot, including those over the age of 65, serving in the military, or people who are disabled. To see a full list of who qualifies, visit scvotes.org/absentee-voting.

Depending on their district, voters will find the following candidates on their ballots.

### U.S. House of Rep., District 01

Four Republicans are vying for the Republican nomination for the 1st District Congressional seat currently held by Democratic U.S. Rep. Joe Cunningham who faces no challengers from his own party as he seeks reelection.

State Rep. Nancy Mace, a Daniel Island Republican who was the first woman to graduate from The Citadel Corps of Cadets, has recently received the endorsements of House Republicans including House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

Mace said she is the candidate who can bring together people from every end of her party. Outside of serving in the state house, Mace is a mother of two and a real estate agent.

Kathy Landing, another GOP candidate in the Republican primary, was recently endorsed by a former Republican U.S. senator from South Carolina. Landing has revealed in ads run

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