

City of Richmond



LEVAR M. STONEY
MAYOR

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

On May 31, 2020, you declared a State of Emergency and authorized assistance to localities in response to the escalating violence across the Commonwealth with a termination date of June 29, 2020. Although the level of violence throughout the past few weeks has not escalated in the broader Commonwealth, the City of Richmond continues to experience and address multiple daily protests, rallies, marches, and other public demonstrations. Given the unique circumstances of our city, I respectfully request that the Emergency Declaration (Executive Order-Sixty-Four) be extended for an additional thirty-days to provide support to keep our communities and personnel safe.

As Richmonders march in the wake of the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, call on police reform and call on the removal of confederate monuments, the climate of our city has inevitably risen and has maintained at this heightened level since May 31. Today, Richmonders are calling out loud and clear for policies, practices, and public spaces that reflect a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable city. While we diligently work to implement these changes, peaceful demonstrations are evolving into unlawful assemblies during late night and early morning hours.

Recently, protestors in Richmond have taken the matter of confederate monuments into their own hands, pulling down celebrations of the Lost Cause as an expression of a broader, collective frustration and anger toward systemic racism in all of its forms, including symbolic and operational. Due to the grand scale of these structures, further ad-hoc removal is an endangerment to the lives of Richmonders. We can remove and replace a statue. We cannot do the same for a human life.

Additionally, there is the likelihood that confederate monuments and Monument Avenue will continue to be areas for counter-protestors, including from beyond Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia, whose tactics have led to deadly violence in Charlottesville and a hate crime assault using a vehicle in Henrico. Public safety has also been made tenser by the continued use of divisive language, messaging, and tactics by the U.S. President.

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The Richmond Fire Department has continued to implement nightly Task Force companies with aid from surrounding counties to assist with building, trash, and car fires as a result of looters and disgruntled protestors. We have increased the number of personnel on duty daily to ensure Richmonders are protected as much as possible. Emergency matters unrelated to protests persist, and without extending Emergency Declaration (Executive Order-Sixty-Four), the bandwidth of our personnel will reach its limit due to the additional demand to curtail damage done by bad-faith demonstrators. All leave for our personnel has been canceled in order to ensure we have the maximum amount of coverage throughout the city. Our personnel are tired but continue to report for duty.

Considering other fiscal and workforce challenges in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Richmond Fire Department has also been at the forefront in providing the City of Richmond government offices and personnel with all personal protective equipment that they require to report to work daily. With this being the end of Fiscal Year 2020, we currently have minimum funding to cover costs.

Therefore, in the interest of public safety, I respectfully request that the Emergency Declaration (Executive Order-Sixty-Four) be extended for an additional thirty-days to provide the necessary support and resources to keep our communities safe and our government personnel protected.

Sincerely,

Levar M. Stoney
Mayor