HOW LEGISLATURES ARE GETTING BACK TO WORK
MONDAY, DEC. 7, 2020
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REMOTE SESSIONS

Continuity of Legislature: Remote Floor Participation and Voting Allowed

LEGEND
- House Chamber
- Senate Chamber
- Both Chambers

as of 11/15/2020

NCSL
COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

Preliminary Plans for Legislatures/Chambers in 2020 and 2021
States have been grappling with the issue of health and safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main topics of discussion today:

- Health and Safety Protocols Survey results
- Examples of chamber/legislature plans
- Off-site meeting plans & public access to capitols
In Oct. 2020, NCSL initiated a survey to gain insight regarding current and/or planned safety protocols.

Information discussed today is preliminary and subject to change.

Six main survey topics:
- Public health expert/medical consultant advice
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Safety partitions
- Social distancing requirements
- Health screenings
- Cleaning and sanitation protocols

26 responses received from 23 states/legislative chambers, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam.
Many states have consulted with public health experts and/or medical consultants.

State Department of Health, Public Health Officials, Public Safety, Governor’s Offices are some examples:

- Alaska consulted with Chief Medical Officer and Commissioner of Health and Chief Epidemiologist
- Arkansas consulted with State Department of Health
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) provided guidance prior to Nov. special session
  - Health screenings, testing, contact tracing and ability to provide N95 masks from the state Emergency Operations Center, if requested
- Florida Senate consulted with infectious disease and prevention experts at Tampa General Hospital and University of South Florida prior to Nov. organizational session
- Oklahoma Senate consulted with health professionals from University of Oklahoma Medical Center
- South Dakota working with Health Department and Association of Physicians
PPE AND FACE COVERINGS

- Florida House – masks not required for members *(applies to 2020; 2021 session protocols will to be released before end of Feb. 2021)*
- Florida Senate – masks required for all in attendance *(applies to 2020 organizational session only)*
- Maryland House – face coverings required in 2021 *(County Health Dept. can have members properly fitted for N-95 masks for purchase)*
- Maryland Senate – face coverings required in 2021 *(applies to 2021 legislative session)*

Access to PPE:
- Every chamber/legislature reported providing face masks in various ways
- Majority of states provide face masks to legislators and legislative staff
  - Masks also offered to others: registered lobbyists, members of the public and credentialed press
- Face shields and gloves were reported to be provided upon request in a couple chambers
Reported social distancing measures include:

- Scheduling of appointments in advance
- Member desks 6’ apart
- Limited entrances and exits
- Directional signage
- Capacity limits
- Ability to use overflow spaces
HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Majority of states report requiring temperature checks and/or COVID-19 screening questions prior to entering the capitol building
  - Administered by outside groups, capitol police, sergeant-at-arms or other security/building screening unit or self-administered
  - Some capitol buildings are closed and some do not require health screenings

- Health Screening Apps *(Maryland House/Senate – OIS designed, Michigan – Microsoft Forms, Washington - MyMedBot)*

- Examples of COVID-19 testing protocols:
  - Alaska
  - Colorado
  - Florida
  - Maryland
  - Wyoming
SANITIZING AND CLEANING PROTOCOLS

- Majority of states report sanitizing protocols in various spaces:
  - Chambers, committee rooms, gallery, member offices, staff offices, public spaces (information desks, etc.)
  - Some capitol buildings remain closed and spaces are only sanitized when necessary
- Typically, maintenance and custodial staff sanitize the spaces
  - Sanitize daily or as often as needed/after every use of the space
  - Several legislatures report using an outside vendor or contractor to sanitize daily or as often as needed
- Every state reports access to hand sanitizer in the Capitol building
Example plans:

- **Florida House Nov. 2020 Organizational Session Protocols**
  - HEPA air purifiers and disinfecting technology placed in key areas, masks provided, COVID-19 testing required, one guest allowed

- **Florida Senate Nov. 2020 Organizational Session Protocols**
  - HEPA filters installed, COVID-19 testing required, one guest allowed on Floor, no district staff travel

- **Maryland House plan for 2021 Legislative Session**
  - Increased HVAC/air flow protocols, COVID-19 testing tent available, contact response team in place

- **Maryland Senate 2021 Session Operations Plan**
  - Increased HVAC/air flow protocols, contact response teams in place
OFF-SITE MEETINGS & PUBLIC ACCESS TO CAPITOLS

- Examples:
  - Arkansas House – Basketball arena
  - Illinois House – Concert venue
  - Maine House/Senate for organizational session – convention center
  - New Hampshire House – Organizational session outside at football field
  - Virginia House – Outside
  - Virginia Senate – Museum of Science

- Currently, 21 capitols are open to the public and 30 capitols are closed to the public
QUESTIONS

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