
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

April 2, 2020



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

NCSL COVID-19 WEBINAR — CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS

Webinar Series. On March 25, 2020, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) held a webinar related to government and election issues related to the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States. The information in this article is current as of the date of the webinar. The webinar is posted on the NCSL's [website](#).

State Government and Legislative Responses. As of March 24, 2020, 29 state and U.S. territory legislatures have postponed or otherwise recessed their legislative sessions. Twelve state legislatures have adjourned sine die, and four are not in session in 2020. Many of the legislatures have recessed until the COVID-19 threat has passed, but have tentatively set dates in mid-April or later to reconvene. Several states have continued to hold remote committee meetings during the legislative recess. Thirty-six state legislatures have the ability to call themselves back into special sessions after adjournment.

Legislatures are investigating remote participation to facilitate meetings and hearings but are facing both logistical and legal issues. Rural states often do not have statewide Internet infrastructure capable of supporting remote participation, and many state constitutions require the legislature to meet at the seat of government, require certain actions to be taken within the chambers of the legislature, and require legislators to be present to vote.

Census. As of March 25, 2020, the Census Bureau has stated that filling out the Census form online is the healthiest option and has delayed some operations. The Census has hired 600,000 field workers and has placed them on hiatus for at least several weeks.

Elections. Most states have election-specific emergency powers to delay an election or relocate polling places, and some have the ability to both delay elections and relocate polling places. Louisiana was the first state to delay its primary election on March 13, 2020. Its primary election was originally scheduled for April 4, 2020, and is now scheduled for June 2, 2020. Between March 13, 2020, and March 25, 2020, 10 more states delayed primary elections, and 3 delayed municipal elections. Many states are investigating "absentee voting for all," or mail-in voting, and several states are implementing electronic means to request mail-in ballots. Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Utah, and Hawaii already mail ballots to all registered voters.

LSA Staff Contact: Christopher Ubben (515.725.0134) chris.ubben@legis.iowa.gov

Doc ID 1133699