
Gov. Kemp to declare coronavirus emergency

By Dave Williams/Capitol Beat News Service

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ATLANTA - Gov. Brian Kemp will declare a public health emergency for the state of Georgia Saturday morning, the governor announced late Friday afternoon.

Kemp issued a statement following President Donald Trump's declaration of a national emergency, which will free up more federal aid to help with the response to coronavirus.

"This [state] declaration will greatly assist health and emergency management officials across Georgia by deploying all available resources for the mitigation and treatment of COVID-19," Kemp said.

The governor's declaration is Georgia's first ever public health emergency, according to a review of state records by Kemp's office.

"At this time, it is appropriate for faith-based organizations and similar entities to consider cancellation of public events and services," Kemp said. "Contact your local public health office or consult official sources, such as the [federal] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Georgia Department of Public Health, for helpful guidance on decision-making.

"Elderly citizens and those with chronic, underlying health conditions face a serious threat to their health, and we must do everything in our power to reduce risk associated with this virus. Continue to support one another, be mindful of potential exposure, use best practices to prevent infection, and pray for your fellow Americans in the weeks ahead."

Kemp said he will call the General Assembly back to the state Capitol on Monday to ratify his action through a joint resolution. Legislative leaders had suspended the current 40-day session on Friday, so lawmakers' return to the Gold Dome likely will be brief.

As of Friday afternoon, 42 cases of coronavirus had been confirmed in Georgia and one person had died from it. State health officials have urged vulnerable populations like people age 60 and older and those with chronic health issues to avoid crowds, stock up on supplies and prepare to stay at home in the event of a worse outbreak.