

November 2020

## **DR. KHALDUN: COVID CASES ‘OUT OF CONTROL’**

With more than ten percent of COVID-19 tests coming back positive, Michigan’s Chief Medical Executive, Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, said it means “this virus is out of control.”

The seven-day average for deaths of 35 is seven times the amount it was back in June. Hospitals are filling up, Dr. Khaldun said, and 20% of ICU beds statewide have COVID-19 patients in them, with that rapidly increasing.

“We are now in the dreaded surge that we have been warning about for months,” Dr. Khaldun said.

More than 8,200 Michiganders have died from COVID-19.

## **NEW RESTRICTIONS ANNOUNCED**

On Sunday, November 15 the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced new COVID-19 reduction restrictions that will be in effect through December 8.

The new restrictions are:

- Bars and restaurants must close indoor service.
- High school and college classes must move online.
- Gyms must enforce distance, and group exercise classes must cease.
- Movie theaters, bowling centers, and casinos must close.
- Organized youth sports are suspended for three weeks.

The new order enhances prior DHHS public health directives that require people wear masks, limits indoor and outdoor gathering sizes, set capacity limits for bars and restaurants, and require companies to screen employees for symptoms of COVID-19.

Attorney General Dana Nessel reminded county public health departments and local law enforcement that they are the lead agencies in enforcing these orders and that the Attorney General’s office stands ready to assist them in their efforts.

## **LINE 5 EASEMENT BEING REVOKED AND TERMINATED**

Governor Gretchen Whitmer has notified Enbridge that the controversial easement allowing it to operate the dual Line 5 pipelines in the Straits of Mackinac is being revoked and terminated.

As a result, Enbridge is to cease operations of the pipelines by May 2021, allowing for an orderly transition that protects Michigan's energy needs over the coming months. The state is also calling for Enbridge to permanently decommission the pipelines.

Governor Whitmer also announced the filing of a lawsuit asking the Ingham County Circuit Court to recognize the validity of the move to terminate the easement.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AGENCY DIRECTOR RESIGNS**

Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) Director Steve Gray has resigned. No reason has been given for his departure.

However, Governor Gretchen Whitmer told the *Detroit Free Press* in an article the day after Mr. Gray's announced resignation that the "opportunity...to take the agency forward in a different way" will be a "good thing."

In a news release, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that Office of State Employer (OSE) Director Liza Estlund Olson will serve as acting director of the UIA. Replacing Olson at OSE will be Cheryl Schmittdiel serving as acting director.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ALLOWING INDOOR NURSING HOME VISITS**

In an emergency order issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Robert Gordon, indoor visits at nursing homes are now being allowed under certain circumstances.

The order links visitation rules by a county's risk level, as determined by the state's MI Safe Start Map.

Under recently passed legislation, HB 6137, starting November 15, DHHS will have to report weekly the number of new coronavirus cases and deaths in nursing homes.

## **RESTAURANT TRADE ASSOCIATION AND HOSPITALITY GROUPS GO TO COURT**

A lawsuit was filed this week in U.S. District Court by the Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association (MRLA) and other hospitality groups against the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for its November 15 order shuttering indoor dining as part of a coordinated effort to stop the spread of coronavirus in Michigan.

The suit says the order allows some private businesses, including gyms, retail establishments, and tattoo parlors to continue indoor operations while shuttering restaurants for the second time since the pandemic began.

The lawsuit alleges a violation of the commerce and dormant commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution and violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment's due process clause.

## **SPEAKER-ELECT WENTWORTH NAMES TEMPORARY COMMITTEES**

Two temporary committees have been named by House Speaker-Elect Jason Wentworth (R-Farwell) to get the ball rolling for the coming legislative term.

The Committee on Committees will work to determine committee assignments in January. It will be co-chaired by Representative Mike Mueller (R-Linden) and Representative Mary Whiteford (R-Casco Twp).

The Policy Action Committee will meet with incoming House Republicans to discuss their top priorities and collect policy ideas. The committee will be chaired by Representative Graham Filler (R-DeWitt) and Representative Steven Johnson (R-Wayland).

In permanent committee appointments, Speaker-Elect Wentworth has tapped Representative Thomas Albert (R-Lowell) as the new chair of the House Appropriations Committee and Representative Jim Lilly (R-Park Twp.) as the new chair of the Rules and Competitiveness Committee, which replaces the current Ways and Means Committee.

## **REPRESENTATIVE LAFAVE INTRODUCES IMPEACHMENT RESOLUTION; SPEAKER CHATFIELD SAYS HE WON'T TAKE IT UP**

Representative Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain) has introduced a resolution this week calling for the impeachment of Governor Gretchen Whitmer in reaction to this

past weekend's announcement of new restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

However, it appears his resolution will be dead on arrival as House Speaker Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) said Tuesday night the House will not be taking up Representative LaFave's impeachment resolution.

Speaker Chatfield said such a move would "be a distraction from the real issues Michigan families are facing in our state."