

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 3.12.20

CONTACT: Senate Office of Communication/House Communications Office

PHONE: 225.342.6270/225.342.9795

LOUISIANA STATE LEGISLATURE TAKING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

SETS CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED INSTRUMENTS AND IMPLEMENTS HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The Louisiana State Legislature is taking precautionary steps to address the threat of COVID-19, more commonly referred to as Novel Coronavirus, at the state capitol during its ongoing 2020 Regular Legislative Session.

Senate President Page Cortez and Speaker of the House of Representatives Clay Schexnayder are implementing protocols to protect the wellbeing of all legislators, staff, and visitors, and have agreed on a joint legislative plan to pass the necessary budget-related bills as a contingency package in the event risk of the virus grows.

“First and foremost, we are encouraging all legislators, staff, and members of the public to remain calm and not panic, but also be prepared by following CDC guidelines on the virus” said President Cortez. “Although we fully expect to proceed normally, we felt it necessary to put a contingency plan in place to ensure that we are meeting our constitutional requirements while also, and more importantly, protecting the health and safety of our members, legislative staff, and all those who visit the capitol.”

The legislature is required by the state constitution to pass a balanced budget and make appropriations by the end of each fiscal year, meaning that a budget and correlating

measures are typically adopted by the end of the regular legislative session, which ends this year on June 1. To ensure that a budget can be passed in the event of a more serious outbreak, the legislative plan agreed to by the President and Speaker involves an expedited process to allow for quick action on constitutionally mandated instruments if necessary.

“While our first priority is to protect our membership, staff, and all Louisianans, we must be mindful of our constitutional obligation to pass a balanced budget,” said Speaker Schexnayder. “To that effect, we have put together this contingency plan that would allow us to expedite the process in a responsible, efficient manner, if necessary.”

The legislature plans to file the contingency package next week but remains on schedule to debate the budget and all other bills as they typically have in previous years.

The President and Speaker have also implemented additional sanitization protocols around the capitol and encourage everyone to take the proactive steps recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect the health of themselves and those around them, including:

- Staying home if you are sick.
- Covering your cough.
- Washing your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoiding close contact (within six feet) with those who are sick.

For more information, please contact the Senate Office of Communication or the House Communications Office. Additional information on COVID-19 can be found on LDH’s website: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus.

###