

House Members & Staff,

Please see the attached memorandum from the bipartisan committee led by Majority Leader Jon Burns and Minority Leader Bob Trammell advising on House operating procedures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

You'll see these recommendations cover House floor procedures, committee meeting procedures as well as precautions to be taken while working in the Capitol and CLOB.

Upon consideration, I am hereby adopting the recommendations of the Committee with very limited revisions. The revisions are reflected by italicized lettering.

The recommendations make reference to a modified seating chart which will encompass the House Chamber floor, Chamber gallery and the use of Room 341 in the Capitol. The modified seating chart is forthcoming. Please look for it in your email.

These recommendations were arrived at after a great deal of discussion between House leadership and staff with the health and safety of everyone as the overriding priority. I thank those involved in the discussions and planning for their tireless work on behalf of our House of Representatives.

I realize these procedures may prove an inconvenience and may cause our daily business to take longer than normal. However, we are acting out of an abundance of caution so that we may conduct our business in as safe and orderly a manner as possible.

Working together, we will finish the remainder of our session debating policies which will move this state and our people forward. I thank you for your patience and understanding as well as your continued service to our great state. It is my honor to serve alongside you.

Sincerely,

David Ralston
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Date: June 10, 2020

From: Georgia House of Representatives Committee on Reopening
Leader Jon Burns, Co-Chair
Leader Bob Trammell, Co-Chair
Chairman Matt Hatchett
Representative William Boddie
Representative Mark Newton, M.D.
Hon. Bill Reilly, Clerk of the House
Hon. Spiro Amburn, Chief of Staff
Hon. Holli Pitcock, Speaker's Office Director of Constituent Services
Hon. Betsy Theroux, House Messenger

To: Speaker of the House David Ralston

Re: Resuming the 2020 Legislative Session – Policies and Procedures

I. Testing of House Members Prior to Session

As previously submitted to the Speaker and guidance issued by him to that effect, the Committee strongly recommends that all Members of the House and House Staff be tested for COVID-19 prior to the resumption of the 2020 Legislative Session on June 15. If a Member or House Staff tests positive for COVID-19, he or she should not return to the Capitol but should follow the guidance of the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If a Member or House Staff begins to experience symptoms of COVID-19 prior to June 15, he or she should not return to the Capitol until he or she has visited a doctor and received clearance to return.

II. Health of Members During Session

A. Access to the Capitol:

GBA has placed infrared temperature screening scanners at two public entrance points of the Capitol ((1)Washington Street (second floor) and (2) Mitchell Street (ground floor)) and at the public entrance point to the CLOB (Mitchell Street). These scanners are cameras mounted in the entry area that will alert the guards at those entrances when an individual whose temperature is above a certain threshold attempts to enter the building (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, based on consultation with the Department of Public Health). If the scanner alerts the guards, the guards can perform additional screening measures (questions can be asked, additional temperature screening can be performed to determine whether the temperature is 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) on the individual to make the determination as to whether the person should be able to enter the building. These screening mechanisms will be applied to members and staff as they enter the building as well.

During Session, GBA will also provide screening checkpoints that will be staffed with security personnel for members/staff only at the entrance to the CLOB from the parking deck and the second floor Mitchell Street entrance to the Capitol. It is anticipated that the ground floor Capitol Avenue/Liberty Plaza entrance will be staffed and will be open to both Members and staff during Session.

During Session, GBA will close all entrances to the Capitol Complex other than those equipped with a temperature scanner and security personnel, including those that are typically accessed by key cards. Specifically, GBA will be closing the key card entrances to the Capitol on MLK and the key card entrance on Capitol Avenue/Liberty Plaza on the second floor.

B. Health Monitoring During Session:

Upon the reconvening of the 2020 Legislative Session on June 15, Members of the House should monitor their health daily. As Members enter the Capitol or the Coverdell Legislative Office Building (the “CLOB”) (the Capitol and the CLOB may be referred to collectively as the “Capitol Complex”), they will be screened for their temperature through a walk-through screener similar to a metal detector or past a visual screener (a camera mounted on the wall) both of which will be monitored by Capitol Security.

If a Member registers a temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, he or she should not enter the Capitol Complex until having been tested for COVID-19 and received a negative result. If a Member receives a positive COVID-19 test result during Session, the Committee recommends that the Member participate fully in contact tracing efforts with DPH and recommends that the Member report their positive test result to the office of the Speaker of the House and to the Human Resources Department of the House. The Speaker’s Office will keep the Member’s test result confidential and assist DPH and Human Resources in contact tracing efforts and ensuring that those who may have been exposed to the infected Member are instructed to quarantine and not to return to the Capitol Complex.

In the event that a Member experiences any of the following symptoms, they should not attend the 2020 Legislative Session until they have visited a doctor and received clearance to return.

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

In the event that a Member experiences any of these symptoms after the resumption of the 2020 Legislative Session, he or she should immediately leave the Capitol Complex (if present there) and should not return to the Capitol Complex until they have visited a doctor and received clearance to return.

C. Masks:

Masks must be worn by Members and House staff when in the Capitol Complex, particularly when social distancing is difficult to maintain. Members are permitted to remove their masks when they are alone in their private offices but must wear masks when they are interacting with others (including House staff) in any location, particularly when social distancing is difficult to maintain. *Masks shall comply with House Rules 1.4 and 1.9.*

III. Committee Procedures

A. Committee Rooms:

Masks must be worn by Members, House Staff, and members of the public who enter House Committee Rooms. House Media Services has evaluated the various House Committee Rooms and will reconfigure them to allow for social distancing among Committee Members and individuals who plan to attend meetings in person; however, the Committee recommends that members of the public be encouraged to stream meetings online wherever possible. House Media Services will disinfect each room (computers, clickers, tables, microphones, etc.) after each Committee meeting. Additional windscreens (covers for microphones) have been ordered, and the windscreens will be replaced frequently.

Public seating areas in Committee Rooms will be marked to allow for social distancing among those observing (or participating in) House Committee Meetings. For certain Committee Rooms, particularly Rooms 341 and 132 in the Capitol, where there is not sufficient room to provide for seating members of the public, overflow seating areas will be provided with the ability to observe the proceedings.

Committee Rooms will have software for Zoom installed on the computers in the rooms to allow for interactivity for Members or other Committee Hearing participants who are participating in Committee Meetings virtually. These participants will also be shown on the projection screens in the Committee Rooms to allow for further transparency.

B. Committee Meetings:

House Committee Meetings will continue to be live-streamed, as they typically are, and Members will continue to be able to access those live-streams from their offices. House Media Services also intend to live-stream House Sub-Committee Meetings. House Media Services will continue to provide support for conducting Committee Meetings over Zoom.

Committee Chairmen will have the discretion to allow active participation (including voting) by Members in Committee Meetings via Zoom. It is the responsibility of Members to notify their Committee Chairmen at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the Committee Meeting if they wish to participate in a Committee Meeting virtually.

Committee Chairmen are encouraged, where possible, to schedule Committee meetings as far in advance as practicable to allow for House Media Services to adequately staff the physical components of the Committee Meetings.

For in-person Committee Meetings, everyone in House Committee Rooms should wear masks and practice social distancing. Sign-in sheets should be kept of who attends Committee Meetings in person, including members of the public, to allow for contact tracing in the event that an individual who attends a Committee Meeting in-person tests positive for COVID-19. The sign-in sheets should be retained by House Media Services upon the conclusion of each Committee Meeting.

Committee Chairman should make every effort to provide for receiving public commentary and having it entered into the Committee record.

IV. Chamber Proceedings

A. Seating:

1. House Chamber

The Committee recommends that approximately 90-100 Members be seated in the Chamber, based on social distancing guidelines. Seating should be distributed such that a minimum of one seat will be left open between Members seated on the floor. A seating chart should be created showing which Members will remain in their seats on the floor in the Chamber.

2. Gallery

The Committee recommends that Members who are not seated in the House Chamber or in Room 341 of the Capitol be seated in the House Gallery and that seating in the House Gallery be distributed such that social distancing can be observed by Members seated in the House Gallery. A seating chart should be created showing which Members will be seated in the House Gallery and where they will be seated.

The Committee recommends a member (or members, as necessary) of the staff of House Media Services be stationed in the House Gallery with a handheld microphone to be used by Members. Additionally, a member of the staff of the Clerk of the House will be stationed in the House Gallery to assist with voting. The handheld microphone should be sanitized after use by a Member.

3. Room 341

The Committee recommends that Members who are not seated in the House Chamber or in the House Gallery be seated in Room 341 in the Capitol and that seating in Room 341 be distributed such that social distancing can be observed by Members seated in Room 341. A seating chart should be created showing which Members will be seated in Room 341 and where they will be seated.

The Committee recommends a member (or members, as necessary) of the staff of House Media Services be stationed in Room 341 of the Capitol to help facilitate situations in which a Member seated in Room 341 of the Capitol wishes to address the House. Members of the staff of House Media Services should be stationed in Room 341 of the Capitol to provide technical support where needed. Additionally, a member of the staff of the Clerk of the House will be stationed in the House Gallery to assist with voting.

B. Voting:

The Committee recommends that the leaders of the respective caucuses implement a system by which they can solicit feedback from their Members to be delivered to the Speaker's Office by *the close of business* on Thursday, June 11, as to (a) whether a Member intends to attend the reconvening of the 2020 Legislative Session and (b) whether a Member has a specific preference to sit somewhere other than the House Chamber.

The Committee recommends that Members be reminded by the Office of the Speaker that Members are required to notify the Clerk of the House if a Member wishes to be "Excused" from a specific vote or for an entire day of the remainder of the 2020 Legislative Session. The Committee recommends that all votes conducted for the remainder of the 2020 Legislative Session be conducted by voice, including the morning roll call, and that, if possible, the votes should be displayed on the screen in the House Chamber for verification purposes. The Clerk of the House should, after the initial roll call voice vote, re-call the names of those Members who (a) are not marked as "Excused" and (b) have not yet registered their vote.

It is the responsibility of Members to ensure that the vote displayed on the screen in the Chamber accurately reflects their vote. In the event that the vote on the screen does not reflect the Member's vote, the Member should immediately alert the Clerk of the House (or a member of the staff of the Clerk of the House) to have the vote corrected prior to the closing of the machine. Given that the locking of the machine is at the discretion of the Speaker of the House, the Committee recommends that the machine not be locked immediately upon the conclusion of a roll call vote.

House Media Services should have the video stream of the voting board scroll up and down the voting board multiple times prior to the closing of the machine to ensure that Members have every opportunity to confirm their vote.

C. Members Speaking:

In the event that a Member wishes to speak, he or she should signal their desire to speak by raising their hand to get the attention of the Clerk of the House (or members of the staff of the Clerk of the House), and House Media Services shall assist Members to ensure that they are able to access a microphone. In the event that a Member wishes to speak to a bill, the Member should follow the standard procedure to sign up with the House Messenger.

For members seated in the House Gallery who wish to speak, they may stand at the back center doors of the House Gallery to be visible to the cameras so that they can be seen by the Members seated in Room 341. Members in Room 341 should remain in their seats when speaking. Members seated in the House Chamber should follow standard procedures to speak.