



**Governor Northam Covid-19 Briefing
January 14, 2021**

Major Takeaways:

- K-12 Schools - Gov. Northam says we want kids back in school. So later this afternoon, Dept. of Education will be issuing new guidance for how schools can reopen safely.
- Lobby Day - If you come to Richmond and act out, "Virginia will be ready." Law enforcement is working in close coordination. Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney: "Richmond is aware...prepared...planning for weeks for the upcoming lobby day." Earlier this week, declared state of emergency in Richmond. Goal is respect the right to peacefully demonstrate and to safeguard health and safety of Richmond residents

Governor Northam

- Northam reviews Virginia's vaccination plan. Want to get up to 25k Virginians/day "as quickly as possible" and eventually to 50k/day. We're currently are getting about 110k vaccine doses per week.
- We want every vaccinator to administer vaccine doses as fast as possible. Focus on priority populations, but we also want vaccines in arms.
- Only a handful of states have given more doses than Virginia has, and they're bigger than we are. Virginia has distributed 100% of the vaccines we've received to 160 vaccination sites across Virginia.
- We have 8.5 million people. At two shots each, that's 17 million shots. So "Virginia needs everyone to move faster."
- Grateful for partnership with hospitals. In recent days, seeing a new attitude from federal partners, able to work much more closely with them. A better federal partnership and support will help all the states.
- In Virginia, we're following CDC recommendations. About half of Virginia now eligible to receive the vaccine; this is a major logistical challenge and will take a while. Everyone will need to be patient. We're moving faster every day. Vaccinations clinics are well run and very efficient. We need people to get the vaccine; it's our only way out of this pandemic.
- Virginia Medical Reserve Corps is doing great work - "we need you to help," so please volunteer if you have medical experience or want to help with logistics.
- Vaccines are how we get back to a "near normal," the "light at the end of a long and dark tunnel." Encourages everyone to get vaccinated. "Your turn is coming - and soon."
- Wayne Turnage - former Chief of Staff to Gov. Tim Kaine and now Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Resources and Director of Department of Health Care Finance at District of Columbia - speaks about the importance of 60%-70% of the population being vaccinated. Also talks about many African Americans having a "justifiable

mistrust" of vaccinations, due to an "egregious history" of "medical experiments once implemented in the Black community." Despite this, Turnage attests to the efficacy and safety of the COVID-19 vaccines proven by "rigorous experimental research study designs." The current COVID-19 vaccines are safe - "no chance that these vaccines will transform into the actual virus and make you sick." Once you get vaccinated, you have <5% chance of getting COVID, and basically zero chance you'll become deathly ill. The benefits of the vaccine are "exceedingly clear" and clearly outweigh the risks. So please get vaccinated, it will literally save your life.

- Gov. Northam says we want kids back in school. So later this afternoon, Dept. of Education will be issuing new guidance for how schools can reopen safely.
- Gov. Northam talks about threats of violence to state capitols and security leading up to next week's inauguration. Says violence has no place here or in Washington. Free speech is a value we all hold dear, but violence is something else entirely. We WILL have a peaceful transition of power next week. Met with National Guard earlier this week. We want them back home safe and need them back to help with vaccinations, etc. If you're planning to come here with ill intent in your heart, "you need to turn around right now and go home - you are not welcome here and you are not welcome in our nation's capital." If you DO come here and act out, "Virginia will be ready." Law enforcement is working in close coordination.
- Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney: "Richmond is aware...prepared...planning for weeks for the upcoming lobby day." Earlier this week, declared state of emergency in Richmond. Goal is respect the right to peacefully demonstrate and to safeguard health and safety of Richmond residents. We all have a right to be heard, but also to be safe and free from fear and intimidation. "Let me be clear - the violent, lawless insurrection and assault on democracy and its institutions that unfolded last week in Washington, DC will not be tolerated in the city of Richmond...We will protect the city..." We expect full cooperation and respect for our new laws, including gun laws.
- Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran - we are taking all necessary measures to ensure the work of our General Assembly proceed safely and without interruption. Will also protect people's constitutional rights to freedom of speech and assembly. Unified command to handle security for Monday, January 18 Lobby Day in Richmond. Preparations began weeks ago. Public can expect to see an abundance of law enforcement personnel throughout the city. They are well prepared for rapid response if an incident occurs. Those who are planning violence will not be tolerated.
- Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins - currently over 2,400 National Guard members supporting security efforts in D.C. Many of the Guard members had to muster in the middle of the night, in a matter of hours...it's a testament to the strength of National Guard members. The Guard isn't just supporting law enforcement, but also vaccination efforts. Their purpose is to be always there and always ready for the Commonwealth.

- Northam - "all 50 capitals in this country are potentially under attack this weekend and during inauguration." "We take that seriously" and will be prepared.
- Northam says "all options are on the table" for putting in place new COVID-19 restrictions. Says restrictions are already in place. This pandemic is in the hands of Virginians - we know what works.

Q & A

Q. Are there estimates of crowd size expected for Lobby Day?

A. No exact numbers. Intelligence is that all 50 state capitols are potentially under attack. Taking this seriously and we are prepared.

Q. Vaccine people in 1A haven't received the vaccine, while others down the line have.

A. They are doing in in parallel. Made modifications and 1B started Monday in 11 health districts and expanding as we speak. As they receive doses and put doses in arms, they will continue to modify the schedule. They set goals, brought in Dr. Avula, and instituted a policy of "Use it or Lose It."

Q. When you look at CDC data, Virginia is still very low on list of numbers of vaccinations/shots in arm? Why is this?

A. Governor - This is the most massive logistical efforts to take place in Virginia to get 8.5 million Virginians 2 doses. Wishes he could do it faster, following the CDC guidelines. We are meeting our goal of 25,000 and then 50,000 per day. Hopefully by mid-Summer all Virginians will be vaccinated.

Q. Does the Governor anticipate there will be new restrictions statewide? Still seeing community spread. If not, why?

A. All options are on the table. Close contact with VHHA to get to capacity for ICUs and ventilators. For the most part, we are stable. The state has put some stringent measures in place. "When and if we need to take other measures, we will."

Q. Crater Health District - What will the state do in the next few weeks to ramp up and prioritize the vaccines for communities of color?

A. Dr. Avula - The 7-day average of doses is headed in the right direction. His role is to connect the health districts and systems and making coordinated plan to get to 1A groups and to 1B as quickly as possible. Right now with 1A, those are highest risk individuals. With 1B and targeted groups, it will skew to minority communities. Also engaging and communicating with the African American community. There's a lot of concurrent work going on that recognizes the importance and the need in the African American community.

Q. Schools, - - - what happens when kids get back to school and what measures will be taken? When will schools reopen?

A. Governor - Schools are safe, our communities are not. We are getting individuals and teachers vaccinated and numbers will start coming down. Children and families are hurting right now)

A. Dr. Lane, Superintendent of Schools - Guidance coming out now to give divisions an opportunity to prepare for the coming weeks. Assessment of mitigation, impact on the school building, and look at community needs. Should be posted in 10 minutes. Look at the matrix. There have been few outbreaks in schools. If you follow the mitigation strategies and low impact, we know schools can be opened safely. Vaccination is a huge part of the strategy. We expect school boards to make decisions to reopen in the next few weeks following DoE guidance.

Q. Concerns about capacity and burnout in the Virginia National Guard.

A. Governor - The Virginia Guard has been very busy this year. He regrets, but is pleased to offer their services. He is sad that they have to protect our nations' Capitol from Americans. These men and women of the Guard and law enforcement hopefully will be coming back to Virginia soon to carry out the vaccination mission. Carlos Hopkins explains that logistical planning is such that they can carry out every mission they have. Resources in place before the mission. They are resilient and love public service. Commanders and leaders take care of the needs of the Guard members. They are a resilient and proud group. Always looking out for burnout and take steps to keep it from happening.

Q.1. Anything to say to those that would link the events at the U.S. Capitol last week with the protests we saw over the summer.

Q.2. Can you speak to the cost of the COVID vaccine?

A.1. There is no comparison between protests

A. 2 No out of pocket expense.