

# Recovery Agenda for Alaska



*Alaska Policy Forum commends Alaska policymakers for taking quick action in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 emergency. We applaud the extension of the tax filing deadline, expanding distance delivery and virtual schools, emergency unemployment benefits, temporary mortgage relief, fee suspension, and telehealth benefits coverage.*

*The current and coming economic crisis is an incomparable situation which was created in part by government actions in response to a serious health concern. Thus it is incumbent upon government to respond in ways that encourage economic growth and provide relief. Many of the reforms listed here have been successfully implemented in other states. We encourage the following actions by Alaska policymakers and officials.*

## **Suspend Certificate of Need (CON) to help medical response**

Certificate of Need (CON) laws severely limit the ability of medical facilities to rapidly react to public health emergencies by expanding capacity. These laws should be suspended to ensure rapid response as needed.

## **Allow telehealth across state lines, without a face-to-face visit first, for all providers**

Telehealth providers in good standing from any state should be authorized to offer care to Alaskans, and without requiring a face-to-face visit first. This will especially help those in remote areas, the elderly, and those with disabilities and chronic conditions.

## **Extend expiring driver's licenses and vehicle registrations**

As working families tighten their belts to deal with forced unemployment, the state should extend expiring driver's licenses and current vehicle registrations until 60 days after the end of the public health emergency related to COVID-19.

## **Adjust Continuing Medical Education (CME) for health care professionals**

Direct licensing boards or agencies to suspend or extend CME requirements for all health care workers, and to award CME credits for time spent battling COVID-19.

## **Waive occupational licensing fees for one year**

As Alaskan family budgets are strained, waive licensing fees for the over 25% of positions that require an occupational license for one year to allow recovery time.

## **Allow physicians to dispense and deliver medication**

Allowing physicians to dispense and deliver medications will shorten the time it takes for patients to receive their prescriptions, improve adherence rates, and potentially lower costs.

### **Enact property tax deferrals**

Families and businesses must not be forced out of their homes or shops because they were not allowed to work or operate. The state should allow and encourage local government to postpone property tax due dates until at least 60 days after the public health emergency. Local governments should also waive late payment penalties and extend the deadline for exemptions and deferrals.

### **Allow pharmacists to prescribe for routine medical issues**

Issue prescriptive authority for pharmacists for routine cases such as strep throat, cold sores, uncomplicated UTIs, etc., so as to free up medical doctors for more serious conditions.

### **Grant pharmacists flexibility for standard refills**

Pharmacists should be granted refill flexibility if the patient is already on file, if it is not a Schedule II drug, and if the pharmacist contacts the prescribing doctor within 72 hours. This can help facilitate social distancing, as well as ensuring individuals have access to critical prescriptions.

### **Put a hold on all non-essential government debt**

The state and local governments should abstain from taking on further debt, which will only slow our ability to recover quickly, and saddle future generations with a deeper burden.

### **Allow temporary or expiring licenses to remain in place during the emergency**

As many administrative tasks are being delayed, direct state licensing agencies to maintain the active status of all professional and medical licenses until at least 30 days after the end of the public health emergency, barring disqualifying misconduct by the license holder.

### **Eliminate regulations not necessary for public health and safety**

Make permanent all the freedoms granted through suspending regulations that hinder economic growth, prevent job creation, limit healthcare access and choice, slow medical and security response times, and harm employer, employee, and consumer freedom. There is no justification at any time, crisis or otherwise, for keeping regulations that negatively affect public health and safety or add to the cost of producing and accessing goods and services.

### **Protect individual liberties and prevent the expansion of government**

In times of crisis there are often attempts to restrict basic freedoms and diminish individual rights. We must be vigilant in protecting against the lurch toward consolidating and expanding government power, like what occurred in so many instances following 9/11.

