



Advocating for Life, Faith, and Freedom in the Public Square

April 2020 Newsletter

Ohio Christian Alliance has been busy during the COVID-19 shutdown

Since the beginning of March, Ohio and the nation are living in an unprecedented time. In fact, our nation has not had to deal with a pandemic since the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. In the past we have had to deal with disease outbreaks of smallpox, polio, and tuberculosis, but nothing of the magnitude of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic that killed millions worldwide.

The coronavirus that started in Wuhan, China has set the entire world on edge. Because we are a public policy organization that prides ourselves on staying on top of emerging news stories, our staff, contributors, and volunteers were keeping us up to date on the reports that were coming out of Wuhan, China in late January. We tracked the aggressive nature of this pernicious virus and tried to understand what the threat might be to the United States. Unfortunately, our concerns became reality. But, no one could have predicted the response by state and federal government authorities of widespread shutdowns to curb the spread of the Chinese coronavirus.

Medical officials could not predict how severe or what course COVID-19 would take. The swine flu and SARS took their toll, but this virus spreads much more easily and the Chinese Communist government offered little assistance to the West as to where the virus originated, how it is spread, what precautions should be taken, and what treatments were effective. President Trump and leaders of other nations had to move quickly to enact travel bans and take stock of what medical supplies they had in reserve. Unfortunately, what we have come to learn is that we were far too dependent on China for most of our medical supplies. President Trump enacted war powers to direct industry to begin manufacturing medical equipment needed and supplies for those fighting the coronavirus on the front lines.

Here in Ohio, we went into an early shutdown, as Governor DeWine announced measures to close colleges, universities, and public schools to lessen the spread of the coronavirus. The Governor also took additional measure with his Health Director to close bars, restaurants, sporting venues, health clubs, hair salons, and anything deemed “nonessential” business. Then, in mid-March, Governor DeWine along with his Health Director issued a stay-at-home order. Ohioans then began to feel isolated and uncertain about the future.

Small businesses are suffering, and according to the Ohio Restaurant and Hospitality associations, there may be as many as 40% that do not reopen. Other businesses are suffering as well, as we now enter the sixth week of shutdown, the urgency now is to reopen Ohio for business, as we have flattened the curve of the virus. God has heard our prayers, and the early projections thankfully did not materialize. We need to continue to safeguard the elderly and the most vulnerable among us as we take steps to reopen Ohio.

Many of the concerns that arose during the shutdown were addressed in our weekly radio program **News in Focus**. Here are some of subjects we covered:

March 12 - CORONAVIRUS Update from the Ohio Department of Health -. March 19 - Congressional Update on Coronavirus Health Crisis and Pastors Roundtable.

March 26 - COVID-19 Unintended Consequences Economic Downturn Affecting Many. April 2 - A Plea to Governor DeWine to Keep State Parks Open During COVID-19. April 10 - Relief is on its way through the CARES Act as U.S. Senator Portman explains. April 16 - Pressure is Building to Reopen Ohio's Economy

Public Policy Vigilance

We are continuing to monitor the effects of the shutdown on churches, small and family-owned business, and individuals at risk, and to report our findings to officeholders in the General Assembly and the Governor's office.

Members of the Ohio General Assembly are hearing from their constituents just how great a toll this COVID-19 closure is having on their personal lives and businesses in their communities across Ohio.

Concern is growing over the stress the COVID-19 shutdown is having on Ohioans on their mental and emotional health. Members of the legislature and community leaders are urging the Governor to open things up sooner than May 1st. Churches are playing a vital role in ministering to the needs of their congregants and reaching out to their local communities.

OCA is not immune from the effects of the shutdown. Giving has dropped off significantly, and some of our grant applications have been turned away or postponed indefinitely. This is a Presidential Election year, and it is imperative that we provide the resources to turn out the vote. So much is at stake in this Presidential Election. **That is why we are asking you to continue your faithful financial support of the Ohio Christian Alliance.**

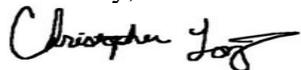
Enclosed is the letter to Governor DeWine urging him to keep the parks open. Also enclosed is the press release concerning the outrageous statements by County Prosecutor Joe Deters. It is important that we safeguard our liberty during the COVID-19 shutdown. There have been egregious examples of violations against religious liberty across the country in recent weeks: A local sheriff arrested an Orlando pastor for holding services, a mayor in Mississippi sent the police to fine each congregant \$500 for attending a drive-in church service, and Kentucky Governor Beshear announced that state police would take down license plate numbers of congregants that came to drive-in services to give them a citation to quarantine them for 14 days in violation of social distancing.

OCA, with Liberty Counsel, is monitoring Ohio to see if there are any violations of civil liberties by local authorities. Thankfully, Governor DeWine, in his social distancing guidelines, has not ordered the churches, but has given strong guidance to houses of worship statewide to help lessen the coronavirus curve. Governor DeWine has complimented churches throughout the state, as they have found creative ways to congregate and to honor the social distancing guidelines for the past five weeks. Churches are conducting services online, teleconferencing, holding drive-in services, and some are meeting in small groups, but no one at the state level has called for heavy policing of churches congregating. **Please contact the OCA office if you know of a violation of religious liberty during the COVID-19 shutdown.**

The Ohio Christian Alliance Annual Spring Freedom Banquet has been postponed until late June or July. We will be making an announcement of dates, times, and speakers sometime in May.

Thank you for your continued generous support,

Sincerely,



Chris Long,
President Ohio Christian Alliance

Ron Koehler, Esq., Secretary

Alfred Davis, Treasurer
Garry Meeks, OCA Board Member
Brian Lowdermilk, OCA Board Member