Legal Issues Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak: An Overview

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The COVID-19 outbreak rapidly shifted the congressional agenda, while altering the daily lives of millions of American residents. Alongside the many medical, economic, social, and public policy questions raised by the pandemic are a range of legal issues. These include both short-term legal questions related to the unfolding outbreak as well as longer-term legal issues that are anticipated to persist in the wake of the crisis. Among the most immediate questions were those related to the scope of state and federal authorities concerning quarantine measures, travel and entry restrictions, the movement of medical goods, health care coverage, and the like. Of more ongoing concern may be legal issues ranging from those related to the development of vaccines, testing, treatments, and other medical countermeasures, to postponing national elections, to civil liability for COVID-19 exposure, to criminal actions related to hoarding and price gouging, to providing economic assistance to individuals and businesses, to foreclosure, eviction, and debt collection moratoria.

This Legal Sidebar provides a list of legal resources discussing these and other legal topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be updated intermittently as additional legal issues emerge.
Health Care, Health Coverage & Medical Countermeasures
Quarantine, Travel Restrictions & Social Distancing
Constitutional Issues
Economic & Employment Issues
Legal Liability Issues
Public Rights & Services
Critical Goods, Procurement & Government Contracts
Criminal Matters

Health Care, Health Coverage & Medical Countermeasures


Quarantine, Travel Restrictions & Social Distancing


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10458, *Presidential Actions to Exclude Aliens Under INA § 212(f)*, by Ben Harrington and Theresa A. Reiss.


Constitutional Issues

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10450, Banning Religious Assemblies to Stop the Spread of COVID-19, by Valerie C. Brannon.


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10447, Constitutional Considerations of Remote Voting In Congress, by Todd Garvey.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10463, Presidential Objections to Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery Reporting Requirements, by Todd Garvey.


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10451, Freedom of Association in the Wake of Coronavirus, by Victoria L. Killion.


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10466, Agency Discretion to Manage Appropriated Funds: The WHO Funding Announcement, by Sean M. Stiff.


Economic & Employment Issues


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10445, Eligibility of Religious Organizations for the CARES Act’s Paycheck Protection Program, by Valerie C. Brannon.


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10463, Presidential Objections to Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery Reporting Requirements, by Todd Garvey.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10442, Recovery Rebates and Unemployment Compensation under the CARES Act: Immigration-Related Eligibility Criteria, by Ben Harrington.

CRS Insight IN11320, CARES Act Eviction Moratorium, by Maggie McCarty and David H. Carpenter.

CRS In Focus IF11500, The CARES Act: Implications for Tribes, by Mainon A. Schwartz.


Legal Liability Issues


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10461, Federal Legislation Shielding Businesses and Individuals from Tort Liability: A Legal and Historical Overview, by Kevin M. Lewis.
Public Rights & Services

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10447, Constitutional Considerations of Remote Voting In Congress, by Todd Garvey.


Critical Goods, Procurement & Government Contracts


CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10456, Executive Order on the Food Supply Chain and the Defense Production Act: FAQs, by Nina M. Hart.

Criminal Matters


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