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Georgia governor signs order blocking COVID-19 mandates on businesses

Private sector businesses and sports teams can follow local COVID-19 requirements if they chose, but Kemp's order stops them stops them from being required to do so.

By The Center Square Staff



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Article

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Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signed an executive order Thursday that blocks local governments from mandating COVID-19 restrictions on businesses. Private sector businesses and sports teams can follow local COVID-19 requirements if they chose, but Kemp's order stops them from being required to do so.

Kemp said the order is aimed at protecting businesses and the state's economic recovery.

"Local governments will not be able to force businesses to be the city's masks police, the vaccine police or any other burdensome restriction that will only lead to employees being let go, revenue tanking and businesses closing their doors," Kemp said during Thursday a news briefing at the state Capitol.

Kemp, a longtime business owner, has been advocating against business shutdowns and mask mandates over the past several months. Savannah and Atlanta recently reinstated their mask mandates in response to a rise in COVID-19 cases. Kemp said the ordinances hurt small businesses, and he trusts business owners to implement prevention measures that work best for them. He gives businesses that flexibility in his current order.

The order also bars local governments from enacting "more or less restrictive" orders than his current COVID-19 orders. Law enforcement agencies or local governments are not allowed to shut down businesses for not following preventative measures.

"The fact is that small businesses across our state should not be punished by local governments, just because they're trying to make a living, pay their employees and save their livelihoods," Kemp said.

Data shows 7,051 new COVID-19 cases, 46 related deaths and 203 related hospitalizations were reported by the Georgia Department of Public Health on Thursday. Georgia's hospitals are at 86.4% capacity.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms referred to Kemp as "The gift that keeps giving" in

a tweet Thursday. Kemp and Bottoms have faced off in the past over Atlanta's mask mandate.

Kemp filed and later dropped a lawsuit last summer against Bottoms and the Atlanta City Council over the city's mask-wearing mandate and their failure to enforce his executive orders.

Kemp said in his order Thursday "the governor has ultimate authority over the state's emergency management procedures, because while other agencies and political subdivisions of the state may be directed or authorized to develop and implement emergency management plans, rules and regulations," Georgia law "clearly provides that no such rules and regulations or order may be inconsistent with the governor's own emergency management directives."

A spokesperson for the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) said the organization was reviewing Kemp's order and could not comment on its contents.

The Georgia Chamber of Commerce did not immediately respond Thursday to a request for comment.



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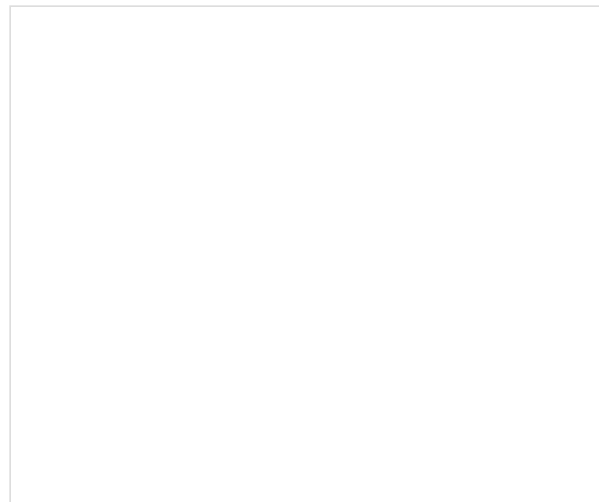
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