

Update on Governor's stay-at-home order

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As you probably know by now, Governor Northam today declared a “stay-at-home order” until June 10. With June 9 being Primary Day and the final day on which to file Nominations for the General Election ballot this November, this puts us in some political quandary.

Assessment / report:

1. It is assumed that the order would shut down the June 9 Primary. That affects both political parties and numerous candidates.
2. The order would curtail our intentions of holding a convention, as late as June 6. We are not the only district with this dilemma. The Seventh District Republicans have a similar problem and I believe one other district.
3. Was this a strategic date established by the governor or did he just not take into consideration the Election schedule?
4. I made a call to the Board of Elections office concerning the matter. For them right now, a more urgent matter is the May elections. However, they stated that the governor had authority under code to modify election dates if necessary. They suggested that our party leadership work on trying to find a solution, as they don't typically get involved with Party processes.
5. I spoke with Chris Marston, RPV General Counsel, who was up to his eyeballs in US Senate candidate matters. He was aware of the governor's order but had not talked with anyone about it yet. We had a brief discussion, which included the following:
 - That we should hit this while it's hot, since it involves so many...
 - That an official party contact should be made to the Board of Elections over the matter...
 - That we (Chairman Wilson/ Chris Marston) should contact the Democratic Chairman and initiate a joint delegation to meet with the governor in order to quickly resolve the matter on behalf of our parties, candidates, and voters...
 - That our Republican state leadership (party chair / EC and possibly top elected representatives) should promptly form recommended solutions to present to the governor...

5. Chris Marston will speak with RPV Chairman Wilson and start initiating action. He will get back to me on the matter.

In conclusion, let me encourage you to avoid conversations that could cause panic. Like the pandemic, this is a situation no one anticipated. It is in everyone's interest to find a workable solution, and we will. Stay tuned.

Our (the 5th District Committee's) Wednesday call is still on. Talk to you again then, if not before.

Melvin Adams - Chairman
5th Congressional District of Virginia Republican Committee

After compiling the above report, below is the response I got from Chris Marston.

Melvin,

I made a couple of calls. At this point, Jack's recommendation is to postpone your convention to June 6 as planned. That's the best chance to have a regular convention if the Governor lifts the order early, or, in the alternative, gives the best chance to figure out some alternative arrangement if an in-person convention isn't workable.

The Department of Elections reports that it has presented several options to the Governor regarding the May 5 city and town elections and they expect a decision this week. They couldn't tell me what the options were, but I expect that they're either proceed with encouragement for all voters to vote absentee or petition the court to delay for more than two weeks. No options have yet been presented to the Governor about the June Primary. They appear to be waiting until they get the May 5 election decision before proceeding to that. I think we will also be in a better position to figure out what to do after we see his decision on the May 5 election.

I also spoke to Dean Goodson, Leader Gilbert's chief of staff. He tells me that it's unlikely that the veto session will be accompanied by a special session at which no legislation would be introduced. He thinks it's more likely that there will be a special session in mid- to late-June to consider economic growth/budget legislation. So, it doesn't appear likely that the legislature will adopt any change to the election schedule. Dean said he's sure the Leader would be willing to engage with the Governor on the primary. He also counseled waiting until after the decision on the May 5 election.

That's what I've got for you today. I'll keep you posted as and when I learn more.

Thanks,
Chris