



**Re-Open Florida Task Force Meeting: Industry Working Group Related to
Accommodation, Food, Tourism, Construction, Real Estate, Recreation, Retail and
Transportation
April 22, 2020
10:00 A.M.**

Introduction by Dana Young

Summary

Dana Young, President and CEO of VISIT Florida, said the goal of the task force is to help the Governor reopen the state's economy by having recommendations to him as quickly as possible. "The state eased into the stay-at-home order and now we must decide how to appropriately ease out of it," she said. The Industry Working Group is focused on the challenges facing highly restricted industries, or the types of businesses that have regular interaction with the public and close interaction among employees, that have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are particularly susceptible to long-term job loss.

She said the working group would take a look at several issues: When we talk about reopening our economy, what should the Executive Committee be considering? What are the considerations as we get back to business? How do we return to normal while keeping employees and the public safe, while at the same time recognizing that keeping businesses shuttered is unsustainable?

Overview of Impact of COVID-19 on Outdoor Recreation

Summary

Lenny Curry, Mayor of Jacksonville, said the city reopened its beaches last weekend with some restrictions. Beaches are only open from 6-11 a.m. and from 5-8 p.m. and only for essential activities defined by the Governor's executive order, which include walking, biking, hiking, fishing, running, swimming, and surfing. No sunbathing, towels, blankets, chairs, coolers, or grills are permitted. "And it's working for us," he said.

He said the city's beaches and parks, which also have reopened, have a law enforcement presence that includes police and fire rescue using carts, horns, and speakers to remind folks to keep their distance from one another. He said the decision was partially based on the fact that the Governor and health care officials were encouraging people to get out in their neighborhoods for fresh air and to walk their dogs while remaining socially distant, "so why not open up larger spaces for people to be able to move around in a safe way?" He said the decision was made after seeing Jacksonville's positive cases of COVID-19 decline. "About 5% of all tests are positive at this point, and that's been trending down for weeks," he said.

Noah Valenstein, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, said the Florida State Park System has 175 state parks and trails that allow visitors to spread out over large areas. "We can also think about our parks and these resources and how we manage them as not just influencing our user experience but also as an incredibly important tool for influencing



user and staff safety. We will be nimble in implementing any of the guidelines and restrictions provided by the task force,” he said.

He said education and clear communication of expectations would be important as the State Park System reopens. “Clear signage, clear expectations, and clear communication of changes to hours and activities will be key to ensuring the safety of both our visitors and our staff,” he said.

Member Questions and Discussion

Dev Motwani, President and CEO, Merrimac Ventures, asked for any insight from lessons learned through Jacksonville’s beach reopening process. Lenny Curry said that a lot of people showed up at once on the first day the beaches were reopened, and there were media photos that make it look as if the beaches were overcrowded with no social distancing, which was inaccurate. “So when you open beaches and parks, just be mindful and work with your local media on still photos vs. video footage of what’s actually happening,” he said.

Tim Petrillo, Founder and CEO, The Restaurant People, asked if reopening beaches had any impact on restaurants and hotels? Lenny Curry said there was no impact on hotels because none are open and there was little change in the ways people interacted with restaurants offering takeout service.

Sheldon Suga, Chairman, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, suggested that the task force look into protecting businesses from lawsuits resulting from COVID-19.

AJ de Moya, Vice President and General Manager, The de Moya Group, said he considers potential lawsuits to be one of the critical issues facing businesses – from the tourism industry to construction – as they reopen. “Senator Brandes has said he is going to draw up legislation that would shield Florida from job-killing frivolous lawsuits, and that is tremendously important right now. Companies are concerned that opening up their office space will put them at tremendous risk, and it’s really important that we protect them. We’ve got to protect ourselves from mass litigation resulting from someone catching a cold or a virus,” he said.

Rob Kornahrens, President and CEO, Advancing Roofing and Green Technologies, asked when would the beaches and state parks be open full time? Lenny Curry said those decisions are being evaluated daily but “we will maintain these restrictions for the foreseeable future.”

Philip Goldfarb, President and COO, Fontainebleau Miami Beach, suggested that the “outstanding strategy” the Jacksonville mayor has put in place should be the model used for reopening beaches throughout the state.

Overview of Impact on Retail Industry

Summary

Walter Carpenter, Chairman, NFIB Florida Leadership Council, said, “It is important that businesses move from a fear-based to an informed-based environment.” He said small businesses should be flexible and adaptable as they reopen, and not overly regulated or



restricted. "The state of Georgia has set 20 conditions for reopening, but I would prefer to see individual industries develop best practices and guidelines to be followed," he said.

He said that small businesses in the state employ about 3.3 million Floridians, which is 45% of the state's private sector employment. "We enjoyed a 3.5% unemployment rate before the pandemic, and our biggest problem was finding workers to deliver the products and services. The NFIB Small Business Optimism Index was at a 40-year high, and things were pretty good for small business, then in a span of just one month the index has hit a 40-year low," he said.

He said that a general guiding principal the federal CARES Act recognizes is to keep employers and employees connected so the economy can resume as quickly as possible when commerce restrictions are lifted, and he encouraged the task force to keep this national policy approach in mind when discussing the reopening of the state.

He said the condition of the small business sector is very dire. Three-quarters of the small businesses have applied for a Paycheck Protection Program loan through the Small Business Administration, but only about 20% of those have received funding so far.

He said small businesses have special needs because they often operate on smaller margins and with much less cash in reserves than large corporate entities. Small business needs three things in short order: employees returning to work, customer products and services, and money in the form of PPP loans.

Monesia Brown, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations, Walmart, said the company has been operating as an essential business throughout the pandemic and its best practices are the safety and security of its customers and associates. Walmart is helping customers practice social distancing by having Plexiglass barriers at checkout stations, floor decals to help with one-way traffic on aisles, taking temperatures and asking basic health questions of associates daily, providing key services completely free of contact, limiting the number of people who can be in a store at one time (which is 20% of capacity), and completing deep cleaning and sanitizing protocols.

She said Walmart has committed to hiring 150,000 new associates by the end of May. Since March 19, Walmart has had more than 1 million applicants and has hired an average of 5,000 people per day, "so we reached that goal early, and now we've committed to hiring an additional 50,000 associates," she said.

Member Questions and Discussion

Glen Gilzean, President and CEO, Central Florida Urban League, asked, "What can we do to encourage, both socially and emotionally, those workers who have been removed from their jobs?" Walter Carpenter said constant communication with those employees is critical. "Try to keep them informed of the plan to move forward, and let them know there is going to be an end to this and businesses will be hiring again. Try to keep things as positive as possible," he said.

Dr. Lillian Rivera, former Miami-Dade County Health Administrator, said there are resources to help with the emotional welfare of workers who have been laid off through Florida's county



health departments. She also suggested following the Opening Up America Again federal guidelines for basic public health.

Jose Cil, CEO, Restaurant Brands International, said there are many similarities between the retail industry and the restaurant industry and suggested that simple, straightforward guidelines and best practices be shared between the groups.

Overview of Impact on Theme Parks

Summary

John Sprouls, CEO, Universal Orlando Resort, Executive Vice President, Universal Parks and Resorts, said Florida's theme parks completely shut down in March and state and local officials would guide when and how the parks would reopen. He said a critical difference between theme parks and other tourism industries lies in their acreage and the ability of guests to practice and enforce social distancing while enjoying the parks.

He said, "We know the paramount issue to our guests will be feeling safe in our parks. If they don't feel safe, they won't attend, and safety revolves around sanitation and space." He said Universal also is exploring ways to reduce the risks of any sick guests entering the park, and it is ramping-up its use of virtual line technology, outdoor queues, staggered seating, and caps on attendance to help with social distancing.

Member Questions and Discussion

Dana Young asked for insight into how the state's small attractions might reopen. John Sprouls said that many of the protocols would be the same as for the larger theme parks. He suggested that smaller attractions make sure their employees are healthy and understand how to reduce capacity to maintain social distancing. "The principles are the same to make guests feel safe," he said.

Joe Lapano, CEO, Tampa International Airport, said he hadn't realized the similarities between airports and theme parks and asked for more information on virtual line technology. John Sprouls said that guests receive electronic devices and use a mobile app. The guest indicates which attraction he is interested in, and his device pings when it's time for him to enjoy the attraction, which reduces the amount of time anyone is standing in line.

Overview of Impact on Sports Industry

Summary

Matthew Caldwell, President and CEO, Florida Panthers Hockey Club, said hockey teams are talking collectively about best practices with a goal of finishing this season "in some way, shape, or form." He said players probably would return "sometime this summer" for mini-training camps before the season reopens. "We're targeting sometime in July to get back on the ice," he said. Games would be played at several neutral sites to empty arenas or to a very limited number of fans, he said.



Len Brown, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer, PGA Tour Inc., said that his organization’s decision to stop play at The Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass in March was made “when we heard that the state’s two biggest outdoor attractions – Universal and Disney – were closing. In 12 hours, we went from business as usual to canceling The Players Championship after only one day of play,” he said.

He said PGA Tour intends to resume play on June 8, and the path forward includes testing players before they leave their homes for the tournament and then testing them again at the tournament site, requiring all players to stay at the same hotel, discouraging (or perhaps prohibiting) movement outside the “safe zone,” requiring the players to pull their own clubs from their bags, eliminating rakes in course sand traps, and working with media on social distancing.

**Re-Open Florida Task Force Meeting: Industry Working Group Related to Administrative, Education, Information and Technology, Manufacturing, Utilities and Wholesale
April 22, 2020
10:00 A.M.**

Introduction by Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran

Summary

Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran said that Governor DeSantis has done a remarkable job and has approached this pandemic with a strong data-driven analysis. He said all of Florida’s agency heads have done a good job of flattening the curve and protecting Florida’s most vulnerable people. He said Vice President Mike Pence and the Secretary of Education have singled out Florida for how well and quickly it was able to adapt to online K-12 learning.

Overview of Impact to K-12 Education

Summary

Jacob Oliva, Chancellor, Division of Public Schools, Department of Education, said the department is going to continue to work on making sure that Florida’s entire education family is able to return to schools and that will enable Florida’s talent pipeline to help fuel the state’s economy. A recent survey from the Council of 100 that showed that nearly two-thirds of employees who are parents said that school closures and lack of childcare have negatively affected their ability to fully perform their job responsibilities during this pandemic. He said in many of counties, the school district is the largest employer, so opening the school districts and having them fully staffed will help the economy.

DOE is operating under the guiding principle that it is urgently transitioning to distance learning. DOE asked districts in early March to create and implement an instructional continuity plan, and



they did a great job. He said a guiding principle for recovery is to support Florida's most vulnerable students, although some achievement gaps may be exacerbated by this crisis.

He said the three topics that he wants to center this workforce around are: how to finish the school semester with distance learning, what to do about summer programs, and how to have school back up and running for the fall semester. He said an issue for students has been not having any closure and missing teachers, staff, other students, and ceremonies like graduation. He said DOE is focusing on students' mental health and sense of belonging since they aren't being watched over by education and mental health professionals every day at school. He said that the department is considering ways for summer programs to be low risk and safe for the sake of students' mental health and to make up any academic shortcomings from the spring.

He said there is a new subgroup of students who are falling behind due to lack of access to devices and internet, or lack of focus, but DOE is developing new and improved online curricula for teachers and students to keep them engaged.

Dr. Michael Grego, Pinellas County Superintendent of Schools, said he had reached out to health care professionals at Johns Hopkins to help guide his school district beyond the CDC guidelines to figure out what the average school day of a student should look like and what preventative measures should be in place. He said his district is developing a multi-tiered strategic plan for getting students back to school and opening up programs for the summer. He said his district is having several days a week of parent conferences to keep parents in the loop with what is happening with the education of their children.

John Hage, CEO, Charter Schools USA, said Florida's educators have moved seamlessly to a "virtual educational world." He said his group was monitoring and tracking attendance and student and teacher interactivity, and was providing surveys to teachers, parents, and students to make sure lessons and engagement is improving. He said they were preparing a mobile classroom model where the student can go to the classroom but the classroom also can go to the student. He said they also are creating a robust classroom and facility cleaning schedule and experimenting with camera technologies that can show what students have fever.

Member Questions and Discussion

Melissa Pappas, ESE Teacher, Orange County Schools, said compassion and grace should be guiding principles for the task force. She said students would benefit from having someone to talk to about any hardships they experienced during the pandemic after they return to school.

Mimi Jankovits, Executive Director, Teach FL, said that the scholarship schools are going to be facing unprecedented crises because a lot of parents will not be able to continue paying tuition and the corporations who have not had income will not be able to donate to the Tax Credit Scholarship. She said she is concerned about public schools receiving an influx of students from private schools who could no longer pay tuition.

Overview of Impact to the State University System

Summary



Syd Kitson, Chairman, Board of Governors, State University System, said when the pandemic hit in early March, state universities activated COVID-19 response plans and executed them seamlessly. The two priorities were to maintain the health and safety of the students and staff and to retain the core academic mission of teaching and learning. He said the universities ceased all study abroad programs and brought students and faculty back from overseas. On March 11, as students were out for spring break, universities directed them to not return to campus but to go home instead to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. On March 17, universities were directed to continue remote instruction for the remainder of the spring semester. Residential students received refunds for housing and food service contracts. He said universities will offer online courses only for the summer.

He said in early March, six universities volunteered faculty and students to assist the state Surgeon General with investigation of the patterns and causes of coronavirus. FIU, UCF, and UF are now partnering with local health officials to open COVID-19 drive-through testing sites in communities. FGCU, UCF, UF, and UNF are providing valuable online resource programs to local public school districts to help K-12 educators and families transition to digital learning. He said he expects fall enrollment to be down due to the economic downturn or at-risk groups of students not wanting to return.

Member Questions and Discussion

Gregory Haile, President, Broward College, said there was a need for a hybrid learning model to keep at-risk students enrolled at universities.

Jamal Sowell, President and CEO, Enterprise Florida, asked if there had been concerns from 2020 graduates about job availability and job placement in the current economy? Syd Kitson said absolutely, and he would continue to focus on that problem.

John Davis, Executive Vice President, Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber was having weekly calls with businesses to make sure they will be ready to reopen. He also said the task force should look into some new training programs for workers having to change the ways they work.

Overview of Impact on Utility Industry

Summary

Eric Silagy, CEO and President, Florida Power and Light, said is not aware of any operational issues or disruptions with electrical, gas or water utilities statewide. He said the company is well prepared since the state faces natural disasters on a regular basis. He said Florida Power and Light has had a pandemic plan for many years and implemented that plan “very early on.”

He said the company has implemented temperature screening locations at all critical function areas and has set up testing sites for employees or key vendors showing symptoms. A team of health care professionals is helping guide the company through the process as new updates about the virus come out. Shift times have been altered to minimize employee interaction and the possibility of contracting the virus, and the company has invested in smart grid technology, which has enabled workers to control the facilities remotely. He said Florida Power and Light



has committed more than \$4 million in emergency assistance funds donations from employees to help support the communities it serves.

He said he is very focused on the challenges that hurricane season will bring because it's predicted to be an active one and the pandemic will make it difficult to attract the right kind of work force for a major storm recovery. Normally tens of thousands of workers come from all over the U.S. to help in storm recovery situations, but that number could down this year because people won't be comfortable with traveling.

**Re-Open Florida Task Force Executive Committee Meeting
April 22, 2020
2:00 P.M.**

The Executive Committee of the Governor's Re-Open Florida Task Force met to hear a recap of two Task Force Industry Working Group meetings and to develop policy discussions around opportunities to provide the Governor with recommendations for reopening Florida's economy.

Industry Working Group Related to Accommodation, Food, Tourism, Construction, Real Estate, Recreation, Retail and Transportation

Dana Young, President and DEO of VISIT Florida, presented the summary of the morning discussion.

Member Questions and Discussion

Joe York, AT&T Florida President, suggested that task force members agree on a set of guiding principles for moving forward. He said the first principle would be "safety first," and a successful recovery strategy would give Floridians confidence that they could safely return to work in public spaces. The second guiding principle would be data-driven coordination and guidelines that complement federal guidelines as the state begins the process of reopening. Third would be access to critical resources and supplies, which would include testing and virus monitoring and working with supply chains and trading zones to ensure access, and the fourth guiding principle would be making sure that the needs of workers and communities are met as they return to work. "We want to make sure they have access to childcare, transportation, and healthcare services as soon as possible," he said.

Jimmy Patronis, Chief Financial Officer, said the pandemic is creating a constantly changing safety environment for employees, businesses, and consumers, and employers will be faced with conflicting guidance and unknown liabilities. "This balancing act of trying to operate a business and protect employees is real, and the business community is concerned that it may face lawsuits because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. I want our businesses to go back to work; I want our employees to go back to work; I want our economy operational. But



there will be some type of liability facing us every day, and we need to keep that in mind as we move forward with reopening the economy,” he said.

Jose Oliva, Speaker of the House of Representative, said, “Time is of the essence. It’s Wednesday, and we’re looking for recommendations by Friday. We’ve heard a great deal from very large corporations that have great resources to do things that small companies cannot do. But we know that small businesses make up the bulk of Florida’s businesses, and I think what they’re looking for, in the very short term, is clarity. Can I open up my barbershop, if the people in the shop are socially distant? If everybody is wearing a mask? These are very specific things, but this is what’s going to be needed. Small business owners need us to tell them what they need to do to open their doors. These are the questions we need to answer by Friday so people can get back to work.”

John Couris, President and CEO, Tampa General Hospital, said, “I think what a business needs, whether it’s small or mid-sized or large, is a set of very practical rules of engagement and guidance for every business to get back up and running. That is critically important for every segment of our economy.”

Ashley Moody, Attorney General, said she thinks that guidance will come from the working groups. She said she was encouraged to hear that the high-risk industry working group included a medical professional, so that as industries come up with specific suggested strategies and standards for what they could do to be safety conscious, that healthcare professional could be a resource to say whether those specific strategies would minimize the spread of COVID-19. “If we can get specific recommendations to our Executive Committee, that will help us formulate a very clear path to recommend to the Governor,” she said.

Dr. Shamari Roberson, Department of Health, said the department is looking at three data points on an ongoing basis – the influenza-like illness reports from the hospitals, the case data on the 14-day trajectory, and the hospital data. She suggested that the task force look at the federal Opening Up America Again guidelines, the most important of which are to wear masks, stay 6 feet from other people, and frequent hand washing.

David Kerner, Palm Beach County Mayor, suggested that one way to increase consumer confidence might be a sticker or a notice posted that says “this establishment complies with the Governor’s Task Force recommendation” to remind consumers of just how reactive state government is being to protect their health and safety.

Patrick Sunderlin, Vice President, Lockheed Martin, said that business people in general are very entrepreneurial by nature, and if the task force provides those guidelines they will find a way to reopen in compliance with all safety measures.

Dale Holness, Broward County Mayor, suggested that some public service information advertising could help get the word out about the new safety standards. He also said that some of the actions taken by the task force could draw some lawsuits at the local levels.



Senator Wilton Simpson, President-Designate, Florida Senate, said, "It's better for us to give a general, broad description of these guidelines instead of trying to be industry-specific. We need some guidelines and some PPE recommendations, and then we need to allow small businesses to use those guidelines in the ways that make sense to them."

Carlos Gimenez, Miami-Dade County Mayor, said, the task force needs to come up with specific guidelines that businesses can actually follow. "Some things can be broad in nature, but others need to be more specific," he said.

Re-Open Florida Task Force Meeting: Industry Working Group Related to Administrative, Education, Information and Technology, Manufacturing, Utilities and Wholesale

Member Questions and Discussion

Jamal Sowell, President and CEO, Enterprise Florida, said he wanted to emphasize that worker safety and consumer confidence go hand in hand and the task force should implement rules that improve both.

Syd Kitson, Chairman, Board of Governors, State University System, said that having medical schools set guidelines for universities to follow would be very helpful and useful as students and faculty return to campuses.

John Couris, President and CEO, Tampa General Hospital, commended Commissioner Corcoran's decision not to reconvene schools and to wait until next school year for students to return. He asked if the education working group was considering opening up schools in the summer for summer camps and programs? Commissioner Corcoran said that has not been made. He said they were looking at a hybrid model of opening for students who needed care but wasn't mandatory for students who were vulnerable or came from a vulnerable household.

CFO Patronis asked if students would have to repeat this past school year or would they progress to the next grade level? Commissioner Corcoran said the Governor waived state testing for this year, so the only way a student would be held back is if the parent decided to do so.

Speaker Oliva said that many essential workers are having to leave their children at home with no one to watch them. He said the task force needs to make a universal set of parameters and guidelines so the government doesn't have to micromanage the opening of every single business in the state.

Todd Jones, CEO, Publix Super Markets, said there needs to be a place where citizens can access all of this information on the decisions the task force is making.

** Please contact your lead lobbyist if you have any questions or require any additional detail from this report.