

YEO Coronavirus Policy Webinar

Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 3 PM ET

In attendance:

- Jonathan Abboud - California Assembly, District 37 - [@imallabboudit](#)
- Markus Batchelor - YEO Communications Coordinator
- Liz Bennett - Iowa State Representative, District 65 - [@LizBennettIowa](#)
- Greg Casar - Austin City Council Member, District 4 - [@GregCasar](#)
- TJ Clarke II - Hartford City Council, Connecticut - [@TJ4City_Council](#)
- Daniel Corona - Mayor of Wendover, Nevada - [@DanielCoronaNV](#)
- Samer El-Amine - YEO Network Intern
- Zahra Hajee - Councilmember, North Westwood Neighborhood Council, California - [@zahra_hajee](#)
- Shakeyla Ingram - Fayetteville Councilwoman, District 2, North Carolina - [@IngramDistrict2](#)
- Raquel Jones - YEO Program Director
- Vanessa Joseph - North Miami City Clerk, Florida - [@Joseph4Clerk](#)
- Laurie Kinney - Communications Director - People for the American Way
- Michelle Landry - Membership Coordinator - People for the American Way
- Christine Lewis - District 2 Metro Council, Portland - [@ChristineLewisForMetro](#)
- Kawana Lloyd - Press Secretary - People for the American Way
- Josh Maxwell - Chester County Commissioner - [@maxwelljosh](#)
- Beth Melton - Routt County Commissioner, District 3 - [@beth4routt](#)
- Natalie Murdock - North Carolina State Senate, District 20 - [@NatalieforNC](#)
- Kristy Pagan - Michigan State Representative, District 21 - [@kristypagan](#)
- Candice Quarles - Desoto City Councilwoman, Texas - [@CandiceQuarles](#)
- Felix Rivera - Anchorage Assembly, District 4 - [@felixrivera89](#)
- Rigel Robinson - Berkley City Councilmember, District 7 - [@RigelRobinson](#)
- Brandon Rose - Sacramento Municipal Utility Director, Ward 1 - [@BrandonRoseSMUDDirector](#)
- Evetty Satterfield - Knoxville County School Board - [@Evetty4TheFirst](#)
- Mark Spreitzer - Wisconsin Assembly, District 45 - [@RepSpreitzer](#)
- Selena Torres - Nevada State Assembly, District 3 - [@selenatorresnv](#)
- Igor Tregub - Berkley Rent Board Commissioner - [@IgorTregub](#)
- Mayrani Velazquez - Terrel, Texas City Council - [@Mayrani4Terrell](#)

Alana introduction:

- Alana explained that we're here to have members talk about policies and inspire other members.
- She plugged the coronavirus website Markus has been working on, and explained that the webinar will give everyone a chance to learn about the policies on the website.

Schools and Children: Evetty Satterfield (School Board Member, Knoxville, TN)

- Evetty explained that she's on the Knox County school board.
- They have been following county board guidance and using state board as guidance.
- She can see how the pandemic has crippled the backbone of public education.
- Education is the backbone of a functional society. The district took that into consideration. They also took into consideration the fact that teachers are also parents, so continuing in the traditional form would add more levels of stress.
- She is also an educator so she understands what teachers are experiencing.

- The board took a step back, since TN doesn't have a full stay at home order. They needed to figure out what is best for kids and families right now: "What do we need to do to service or kids?"
- Knox County School District is not a 1:1 system. There are over 6,000 kids in the system and many families in the community that do not have internet access. Continuing with standard education is not equitable.
- She is going to advocate for moving our public education system into a modern system but keep it equitable. We need internet access now as much as we need water.
- The board partnered with a local news channel to run lessons so the students can look at the TV and learn lessons. Also, they have a youtube channel that they can put lessons on for teachers.
- They provided packets for Kindergarten through 8th grade. High school students can come check out devices if they need them.
- It's clear that Knoxville county schools are closed because they cannot educate *all* students. They are figuring out grading systems today. They're thinking about freezing them at 3/20, but then providing options for students who may not like their grades.
- They are also providing meal pickup for 2 hours on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- Evetty closed by saying that this time off constitutes 3 months out of a child's lifelong learning. Parents should use it as an opportunity to teach life skills, bond with their child, and take care of mental health.

Small Business Relief: Rigel Robinson (City Councilmember, Berkeley, CA)

- Rigel explained that it was important to Berkeley to put small businesses first. This is a tough time for workers everywhere, especially those in small businesses.
- Small businesses are a lifeblood of the economy in Berkeley. It's a terrifying time for small businesses, and therefore, it's a tough time for the whole city.
- Compiled on top of the health risks and closures, the businesses are reliant on the university in Berkeley. A quarter of that population has left to go spend the time at home. This means that on top of everything else, small businesses that depend on students have more challenges to grapple with.
- The city created the Berkley relief fund and the Save Our Small Businesses loan fund, and are working with the campus, and making business owners feel safe.
- The city called an emergency meeting, pulling together small businesses, arts organizations, and renters.
- Any existing business or nonprofit with an active business license was able to apply for loans. The city received upwards of 1000 applications. Berkeley wishes they could grant money to every organization, but if that were the case, businesses wouldn't get a significant enough amount of money to make any difference.
- The city is continuing to plead with state and federal representatives to amplify the \$3 million fund. They have a goal of matching with private donations.
- The first deadline was for council money, and the second round was for philanthropic money.
- Equity components need to be involved with all grants (i.e., art by minorities, businesses with minorities as staff/owners).
- The Save our Small Businesses loan funds were provided for services to impacted businesses who can't get resources for one reason or another.
- They have found that schools and towns are coming together to support each other. Berkley law school is working with businesses that can be connected to law students who can help them through the CARES Act.

- They are working with landlords also. They are asking what all they can do to set an example as landlords (i.e., rent forgiveness from businesses who are renting properties from the city).
- The budget may have a lot more strings attached than it does now. Landlords may not have those tenants at all in a few months. The city needs to be careful with losing businesses/tenants.
- Helpful links:
 - www.cityofberkeley.info/coronavirus
 - www.berkeleyrelieffund.org

Working Families: Gregorio Casar (City Councilmember, Austin, TX)

- Greg outlined his legislation to introduce a rent grace period.
- He explained that this is an impossible time for his constituents.
- The Austin City Council has taken big steps to protect working families. Their local authority is limited, but the Mayor and Councilmembers are stepping up to test the boundaries of what local elected officials can do.
- Greg said we can't be as scared of local lawsuits as we may be normally. We need to stretch to protect citizens.
- His legislation slowed the eviction process, but it has not been enough.
- The council passed an ordinance to introduce a new applicable law where landlords must give tenants a 60 day grace period to pay rent during this time of disaster. The Mayor also banned notices to vacate.
- Mayors can govern the way people come in and out of buildings in a disaster - this is important in a time where government can't have people moving around, and want fewer people experiencing homelessness.
- The city is looking at how they can stretch this. In 60-90 days there will be people who still haven't worked, or have worked but haven't made up rent.
- The city pulled \$15 million out of its rainy day fund to provide direct assistance for housing and those who need city help. Hopefully this will be able to keep people in their homes.
- They are also setting up bridge programs for small business loans and federal loans.
- Additionally, they dropped utility rates, considering more people are working from home and their utilities may spike.
- Helpful links:
 - <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=338266>
 - \$15 million budget amendment:
<https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=338257>
 - <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=338086>

Voting Rights and Democracy: Mark Spreitzer (State Representative, 45th District, WI)

- Mark gave the group details on his vote-by-mail legislation.
- He explained that the Wisconsin government and the Supreme Court made people go vote during the coronavirus pandemic.
- The legislature just met for the first time about the coronavirus and had not done anything prior to yesterday.
- The state ended up holding a primary and all local office elections. The state would have had to extend the terms of local officials if they had extended the election. The election went down on April 7.
- Wisconsin has no-excuse absentee voting. Anyone could request a ballot, but you still need to request it. Clerks didn't have enough staff to process all the requests.

- Ballots need to be received by the clerk ON election day. The state extended “postmarked” to this rule. The post office doesn’t necessarily postmark all envelopes with a date.
- People may not have received ballots on 4/7 so people had to either vote in person or give up their right to vote.
- Mark’s vote by mail proposal just came out. It is not necessarily the same proposal as he would have introduced if they were working on a more permanent solution.
- He introduced a coronavirus-era vote by mail proposal for 2020, with the intention of introducing a more comprehensive bill in 2021. The bill extends registration options and ballot mailing. It only allows for in-person voting for people who cannot use vote by mail.
- People who want to vote in-person can still arrange for early voting, but the point is to ensure that people are not standing in line waiting to vote during the pandemic.
- Wisconsin has a strict voter ID law. Under current law, you need to send a picture of your ID to receive a ballot. There have been issues with older people sending selfies and not ID pictures. This was a huge barrier.
- Mark and his colleagues also want to reform witness rules. They are working with the post office.
- As for procedure, Mark can circulate the bill, but cannot formally introduce it, since the legislature is currently in a special session.
- There has been weird messaging because they are trying to tell everyone that vote by mail is the way to go, but the post office has found letters that had not been mailed.
- It’s important to make sure voters have confidence that if they request a ballot they will get the ballot. It’s been difficult to handle those messages, but an unprecedented number of people in this election did vote by mail.
- So far, the measure has gotten good public support. For locals, they are seeing success in municipalities that automatically mailed people absentee request forms before the election. Those municipalities had dramatically higher voter turnout. They are also expecting to see this in Milwaukee and Madison.
- Helpful link: <https://www.facebook.com/1379860878977850/posts/2374282029535725/?d=n>

Healthcare Access: Josh Maxwell (Commissioner, Chester County, PA)

- Josh explained his county’s new coronavirus testing initiative.
- Chester has a high rate of infections for a small county. The hospitals all have the capacity to treat people. There are enough test kits there.
- Chester has taken the lead on the response to COVID-19. They are the first county in the state to implement antibody testing (ELISA).
- The test is a simple pinprick blood test to determine if there are antibodies present. It determines if you can fight the virus in the future.
- The county purchased 2 tests per person, after new science had reported that antibodies do persist in our bodies.
- They are testing those who are in essential positions as first priority. Because of the recent science on antibodies, the test determines who can be sent back to work first.
- They have so far tested 20,000 emergency workers, healthcare workers, and staff. Prisoners have been tested as well to determine work status for prison workers.
- The test takes 15 minutes or so. They are monitoring tests for emergency services. They are also working on mass-producing tests.
- The county government has daily calls with healthcare providers. The company is selling tests to hospitals. They are finding ways to test that work so they can provide services to vulnerable populations.

- 1 million tests were \$20 million dollars.
- Chester is a lucky area - it is not necessarily in a hot bed spot, but they are able to support neighboring Philadelphia if they need beds.
- It's also important to note that antibody tests can also work to catch asymptomatic people.

Questions and Answers

- Alana asked Mark to provide more details about his ranked-choice voting bill
 - Mark described his automatic runoff bill. He said it applied to both partisan and nonpartisan elections. It determines viability with primaries. Ranked-choice voting is better for primaries. It supports a plurality and this benefits people who may have voted for someone who dropped out. Wisconsin has both great assets and major issues for fair elections. He is also working on nonpartisan redistricting.
- Natalie Murdock explained that she is working on a COVID-19-related bill for absentee voter registration. Her district has a witness requirement also. She is worried about this if there is another wave of COVID-19. She wanted to know how this would work with state statutes.
 - Mark explained that everyone needs to think ahead about printing off absentee ballots, envelopes, and more materials in general. Wisconsin has a very decentralized system. It may be easier for other states to figure out what is realistic for them.
- Shakeyla Ingram explained that it was her first time as an elected official, and that she is in a high poverty area. She wanted to know how people will be able to get emergency funding for food stamps.
 - Greg answered by explaining that food insecurity is occurring everywhere. Small cities need to band together for money that can be distributed to small government. A network of restaurants has stepped up to give meal packs that can be distributed throughout the community in his area. It provides hundreds of meals in socially distant ways. He encouraged Shakeyla and others to start spending now because you know you will get the money at some point. Act NOW. The money will come.
- Alana asked Josh if it is possible for other municipalities to use the company in Chester county to provide tests.
 - Josh said yes and that he will share the information.