Important Upcoming Dates:

- Limited Retail Opening Begins April 24th
- Statewide Order Expires on April 30th (unlikely to be extended, per Abbott)
- Additional Business Opening Guidelines Will Be Issued on April 27th (subject to COVID-19 progress between now and 4/27)

Directs Select Services to Reopen, Closes Schools For Remainder Of Academic Year

**Copies of All Orders Are Below**

4/17 Order (EO-GA-15): Hospital Capacity

4/17 Order (EO-GA-16): Strategic Reopening of Texas

4/17 Order (EO-GA-17): Governor’s Strike Force to Reopen Texas

On Friday, Governor Greg Abbott held a press conference where he issued three new Executive Orders (above) to begin the process of reopening the state of Texas while revising hospital capacity and certain social distancing guidelines. Within the orders, select activities and services that pose minimal to no threat of spreading COVID-19 are allowed to reopen using a "Retail-To-Go" model, certain restrictions on surgeries have been loosened, and schools will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

Within these orders, the Governor has established the Strike Force to Open Texas—a team of nationally recognized medical experts and private and public leaders who will advise the Governor on safely and strategically reopening the state of Texas.

James Huffines will lead the advisory strike force and Mike Toomey will serve as Chief Operating Officer. Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, House Speaker Dennis Bonnen, Attorney General Ken Paxton, and Comptroller Glenn Hegar will serve as consulting members.

In addition, Governor Abbott has appointed Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Commissioner John Hellerstedt, MD, as Chief Medical Officer of the strike force.

These health experts will develop a medical architecture to comprehensively test and trace COVID-19 that will enable Texans to gradually and safely begin the process of returning to work and other activities.
The medical team will work alongside a Special Advisory Council who will share innovative ideas to help businesses strategically reopen while containing the spread of COVID-19. The council consists of 39 business leaders representing the state's regions and industries. The advisory council will collaborate with working groups to devise strategies, statewide standards, and appropriate time frames to reopen the Lone Star State while prioritizing the health and safety of all Texans.

The strike force will immediately begin providing input on potential additional openings of activities and services in Texas consistent with guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Governor will announce a revised plan for the state based on these initial recommendations on April 27.

**The Governor’s second Executive Order (GA-16)** relates to the safe, strategic reopening of select services and activities in Texas. This order establishes a temporary "Retail-To-Go" model that will allow retail outlets in Texas to reopen beginning Friday, April 24. Under this model, reopened establishments are required to deliver items to customer's cars, homes, or other locations to minimize contact.

Under this Executive Order, schools—including public, private, and higher education institutions—will remain closed for the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers may go into the classroom for video instruction, to perform administrative duties, and to clean out their classrooms.

**The Governor’s third Executive Order (GA-15)** relates to hospital capacity and personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for the COVID-19 response. The order loosens restrictions on surgeries put in place by Governor Abbott in March. Beginning at 11:59pm on April 21 through 11:59pm on May 8, all licensed health care professionals and all licensed health care facilities must continue to postpone all surgeries and procedures that are not medically necessary to diagnose or correct a serious medical condition of, or to preserve the life of, a patient who without timely performance of the surgery or procedure would be at risk for serious adverse medical consequences or death as determined by a patient's physician.

Exceptions now include:

- Any procedure that, if performed in accordance with the commonly accepted standard of clinical practice, would not deplete the hospital capacity or the PPE needed to cope with COVID-19, or;
- Any surgery or procedure performed in a licensed health care facility that has certified in writing to Texas HHSC both (1) that it will reserve at least 25% of its hospital capacity for treatment of COVID-19 patients, accounting for the range of clinical severity of COVID-19 patients, and (2) that it will not request any PPE from any public source—whether federal, state, or local—for the duration of the COVID-19 disaster.

The Governor also directed state parks to reopen on Monday, April 20 with strict guidelines to reduce transmission of COVID-19—including requiring visitors to wear face coverings, maintain a six-foot distance from individuals outside of their party, and prohibiting the gathering of groups larger than five.

From a COVID-19 standpoint, the number of coronavirus cases in Texas climbed to at least 17,371, including 428 deaths, according to the latest numbers from the Texas Department of State Health Services. Out of Texas' 254 counties, 192 are reporting cases.

Abbott highlighted the following positive COVID-19 stats:

- The number of infections and hospitalizations are leveling off
- Plenty of hospital rooms and ventilators remain available
• Texas still has the 2nd highest rate of recovery of any state