



## Boozman Bulletin: Taking the First Steps Back

We are all eager for a return to normalcy after strict measures were implemented in Arkansas and across the country to slow the spread of the coronavirus and prevent hospitals from becoming inundated with patients infected by the disease. We made significant progress with passage of critical legislation to support families and small businesses, but what's most important is resuming business and allowing Americans to return to their jobs in a safe manner. At the same time, we must remain vigilant and continue to practice social distancing as commerce restarts.

This is why the phased approach of reopening businesses in Arkansas is essential.

Governor Asa Hutchinson, along with the guidance of Arkansas Department of Health Director Dr. Nate Smith and his team of public health experts, are leading the way for our state's return to business by [establishing protocols](#) to keep citizens safe as doors reopen to customers.

Over the last several weeks, hospitals and clinics resumed elective procedures, churches welcomed parishioners, gyms opened their doors and dine-in services at restaurants across the state returned in limited capacity. In the coming days public pools will reopen to swimmers for the summer.

As a member of President Trump's Opening Up America Again Congressional Group, I've joined discussions about how we can reopen our country in a safe way that protects the health of citizens and supports our businesses. We have to strike the right balance in order to revive the economy and protect public health.



On a conference call with the Opening Up America Again Congressional Group.

One way we're working to decrease the spread of the virus and safely reopen American is by expanding COVID-19 testing. Funding authorized by the [Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) and the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act* has provided more than \$80 million to Arkansas to increase its testing capacity. This support will help achieve the governor's goal of conducting 60,000 coronavirus tests in the state during May.

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## Economic Relief for Arkansas Families

More than 130 million Americans have received their funds and the IRS continues to send this relief directly to bank accounts and paper checks through the mail. Many Arkansans are still waiting to receive their Economic Impact Payment (EIP) that was authorized by the *CARES Act*.

The IRS launched [this website](#) to provide the status of when individuals can expect the funds. The agency has also established a telephone line to answer questions about EIP: 800-919-9835.

Arkansans who have questions are also welcome to [contact my office](#).

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## Agricultural Assistance

Agricultural producers are facing uncertain times and extreme challenges to their industry. This week the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced details of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which will provide up to \$16 billion in direct payments to our nation's farmers and ranchers whose markets have been disrupted

or lost due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Producers can [apply for assistance](#) beginning on May 26, 2020.

I've talked with Arkansas farmers and ranchers about the impact the pandemic is having on their operations. These payments are critical to maintaining production and continuing to provide the food and fiber we rely on as we reopen the country.

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## Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness Application

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was authorized in the *CARES Act* to provide low-interest loans to small businesses to use for payroll, mortgage interest, rent and utilities, with a portion of the loan eligible for forgiveness.

More than 21,000 [Arkansas businesses were approved for the PPP](#) loans totaling more than \$2.7 billion.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) recently released the loan forgiveness [application and additional guidance](#) to help borrowers complete the form.

PPP funds are still available. Interested small business owners can find local lenders and apply for assistance [here](#).

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## Telehealth

Telehealth has been an increasingly important component of health care during the pandemic. This ability has made it convenient, safe and efficient for patients to visit their physician without leaving home.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been a leader in this effort to [expand its telehealth capacity](#). Now more veterans are connecting with their medical teams using this technology which has provided veterans with continuity to VA services during a time when in-person visits have been limited.

The challenge is we don't all have the capability because of lack of access to high-speed internet. That's why I'm calling on the next coronavirus relief package to include [the expansion of telehealth services](#) by funding the Rural Health Program and improving broadband deployment.

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## Honoring their Sacrifice

Memorial Day is an important time of solemn remembrance of our military personnel who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The freedoms we have as Americans are not simply given. They are fought for by ordinary individuals who understand that our liberty was, and is, a core component of our way of life and are willing to put their life on the line to

defend it.



Traditionally, communities across the nation pay tribute to our fallen heroes with public events. This year we have to adapt to new challenges while still honoring those we keep close to our hearts. Although this will take place in smaller and more private settings, I know it will still afford them the dignity and respect they so richly deserve.

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