

March 26, 2020



NYSAC Special Bulletin

Between the Legislature and COVID-19, news is breaking at a pace like we've never experienced — and it all directly ties to the work New York's counties are doing. To help keep you as updated as possible, NYSAC will be sending out daily "Special Bulletins."

COVID-19 By the Numbers

As of 11:40am today (3/26), New York State has 37,258 total positive test results. This is an increase of about 7,000 from yesterday. Of the 37,258 total positive results, 5,327 are hospitalized (14%). Of the 5,327 that are hospitalized, 1290 are in the ICU — this means that 3.4% of the positives are in ICU and 24% of hospitalizations. 1,517 patients discharged to date.

To date, New York has tested 122,104 individuals, 18,650 more tests since yesterday.

There are 385 deaths in New York State. That is 100 more casualties than yesterday.

First Things First

We get it. You have too many things to do and not enough time to do them. Here are the top 3 things you need to know.

- 1) Governor Cuomo's proposal to unilaterally reduce reimbursements to local governments based on revenue projections presents a major problem for counties and school districts and would result in cuts to health and social services that are currently in high demand.
- 2) Track your COVID-19 expenses so you can get FEMA reimbursement.
- 3) IBM is hosting a demo of its CHAT-BOT technology on Friday, from 1-2 PM [here](#). This technology can help overwhelmed county call centers.

New Budget Proposal Bad News for Counties

Today during his daily press conference, Governor Cuomo announced he is seeking

sweeping authority to unilaterally reduce reimbursements to school districts and local governments over the coming fiscal year based on quarterly adjustments to revenue projections.

Counties are highly concerned with these proposals as most expenses incurred by county governments, which is local government, are the services mandated by the state to be delivered locally. These, primarily, are state health and social welfare programs—areas being called upon now at extremely high levels.

The state must rethink this proposal and ensure counties have the resources on the front lines to manage the current crisis.

[Read the full statement of opposition from NSYAC President Jack Marren.](#)

NY Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins Sheds Light on Budget, COVID-19 Response

In an interview with WCNY's Capitol Pressroom, the Senate Majority Leader said that while the Legislature has been talking to the Governor, those conversations have mostly been about COVID-19 and that major budget items are still outstanding. They haven't come to any agreement yet.



Stewart-Cousins said that the state needs more direct aid from the Federal government and that she has been told there is a continuing conversation about what a next federal package will look like.

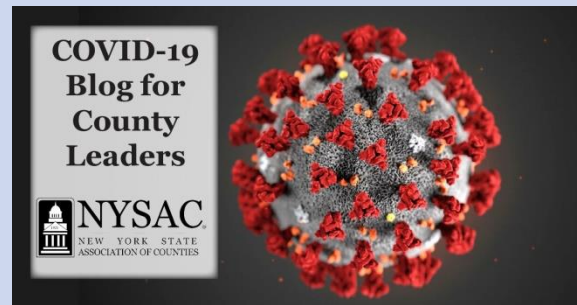
Importantly for counties, she said that in regard to the Governor's proposal, she would "never be in favor" of giving the Governor/DOB wide latitude to cut aid to local governments without involvement of the Legislature "in most decisions," and that "anything going forward will have limitations and constraints on the Governor, but we do need to be able to react and respond."

She also said there has not been a discussion of freezing pay for public sector employees to free up money, but something like that would not be off the table.

The Legislature will be passing legislation to allow them to convene electronically.

See the innovative ways counties are responding to the pandemic at our COVID-19 blog.

[COVID-19 Blog: Counties Innovating Vol.4](#)



Early Signs of Economic Hardship from COVID-19

Counties have begun to experience dramatic increases in SNAP submissions through mybenefits.gov. Whether that continues to be the case is yet to be seen. But right now, some counties report that they are considering shifting DSS staff depending on the continued demand for benefits.

This is a multi-front war. One is on the public health front, and the other is a social and economic front that will strain governments' ability to provide adequate human services. This is compounded by a simultaneous decrease in sales tax revenues to near zero.

In addition to this impact locally, the federal government today announced that more than 3.2 million Americans have filed for unemployment. These individuals will need support at the local level.

These are just some of the reasons why counties cannot afford to take additional cuts like Medicaid and other budget shifts.

Tracking COVID-19 Expenses

As the details of the federal coronavirus stimulus package become available, it makes sense to use the current disaster management process as a model if local governments hope to receive federal assistance for their efforts. For a quick overview of this process, see the FEMA publication, "A Guide to the Disaster Declaration Process and Federal Disaster Assistance." This can be accessed from our /health website under federal resources.

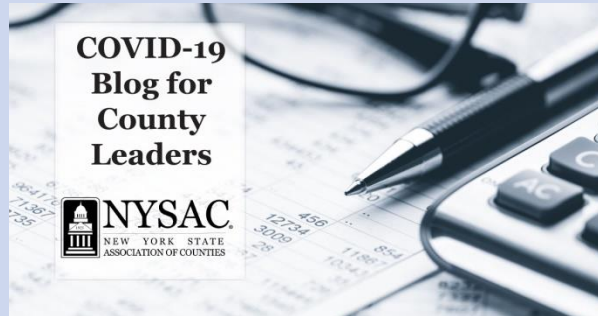
To help you navigate these complex programs and track eligible costs incurred, ICMA Strategic Partner Hagerty Consulting has provided a toolkit available here for download that you and your teams can use to track disaster-related costs. This toolkit includes cost-tracking instructions, templates, and a supporting documentation tool for your use and review that incorporates guidance on:

- Force Account Labor
- Force Account Equipment
- Force Account Materials
- Donated Resources
- Rented Equipment
- Contracts

Supporting Documentation - excerpt from FEMA's Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG).

While this is only the first step of a much larger, longer, and burdensome reimbursement process, it should be helpful to you and your team.

[Learn more about managing county finances at our COVID-19 Blog post: Managing County Finances in the Wake of COVID-19](#)



IBM Watson Call Assistant for County Call Centers

David Sodergren from IBM joined NYSAC's nightly County Leader conference call to talk about a CHAT-BOT (Citizen Support Virtual Agent) that can help overwhelmed county call centers deal with the high volume of incoming calls.



The CHAT-BOT would overlay your existing website Q and A section or call center and help answer or direct up to 50% of the questions from the public.

David will be hosting a WebEx demo tomorrow, Friday, March 27th from 1-2pm at: <https://ibm.webex.com/meet/david.sodergren>

Email - David.Sodergren@ibm.com

Senate Unanimously Passes the CARES Act (3rd Stimulus Bill)

On Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The legislation now heads to the House where a voice vote is expected on Friday (3/27).

It is the largest emergency package in U.S. history (\$2 trillion).

Senator Schumer provided NYSAC an updated estimate on what New York State is expected to receive.

- \$33.8 Billion – Small Business Administration payroll relief to New York small businesses
- \$25 Billion – Hospital and other medical facilities. For protective equipment for health care workers, testing supplies, staffing and new construction to expand services
- \$16 Billion – Unemployment Compensation on Steroids for New Yorkers
- \$15 Billion – Direct cash payments. \$1,200 for individuals and \$2,400 for couples making less than \$75,000 and a graduated smaller amount for those making up to \$99,000
- \$10 Billion – FEMA estimated \$2 billion a month in payments to New York for five months
- \$7.5 Billion – State and local coronavirus relief fund
- \$4.1 Billion – Transit Systems, especially the MTA, which is directly supported by the NY state budget
- \$2 Billion – Strategic National Stockpile
- \$1 Billion – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund – K-12.

Other critical funding for New York:

- \$690.4 Million – Airport Improvement Grants
- \$193 Million – Community Development Grants
- \$191.4 Million – HUD Homeless Assistance, Emergency Solutions Grants
- \$164.6 Million – Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund
- \$162.4 Million – Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)



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