



Legal Issues Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak: An Overview

Updated May 1, 2020

The COVID-19 outbreak has rapidly shifted the congressional agenda in recent weeks, while altering the [daily lives](#) of millions of American residents. Alongside the many medical, economic, social, and public policy questions raised by the pandemic are a range of legal issues. These include both short-term legal questions related to the unfolding outbreak as well as longer-term legal issues that are anticipated to persist in the wake of the crisis. Among the most immediate questions are those related to the scope of state and federal authorities concerning [quarantine measures](#), [travel and entry restrictions](#), the movement of [medical goods](#), [health care coverage](#), and the like. Of more ongoing concern may be legal issues ranging from those related to the [development of vaccines](#), testing, treatments, and other [medical countermeasures](#), to [postponing national elections](#), to civil liability for COVID-19 exposure, to [criminal actions](#) related to hoarding and price gouging, to providing economic assistance to individuals and businesses, to [foreclosure](#), [eviction](#), and debt collection moratoria.

This Legal Sidebar provides a list of legal resources discussing these and other legal topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be updated intermittently as additional legal issues emerge.

Health Care, Health Coverage, and Medical Countermeasures

Quarantine, Travel Restrictions, and Social Distancing

Critical Goods, Procurement, and Government Contracts

Economic and Employment Issues

Public Rights and Services

Criminal Matters

Health Care, Health Coverage, and Medical Countermeasures

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10436, *COVID-19: International Trade and Access to Pharmaceutical Products*, by Nina M. Hart.

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

LSB10433

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10422, *COVID-19 Medical Countermeasures: Intellectual Property and Affordability*, by Kevin J. Hickey.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10443, *The PREP Act and COVID-19: Limiting Liability for Medical Countermeasures*, by Kevin J. Hickey.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10430, *Section 1135 Waivers and COVID-19: An Overview*, by Jennifer A. Staman.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10427, *COVID-19: Legal Considerations for Bringing a New Vaccine to Market*, by Erin H. Ward.

Quarantine, Travel Restrictions, and Social Distancing

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10450, *Banning Religious Assemblies to Stop the Spread of COVID-19*, by Valerie C. Brannon.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10451, *Freedom of Association in the Wake of Coronavirus*, by Victoria L. Killion.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10415, *COVID-19: Current Travel Restrictions and Quarantine Measures*, by Edward C. Liu.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10453, *COVID-19 and Libraries: E-Books and Intellectual Property Issues*, by Kevin T. Richards.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10440, *Webcasting in the Time of COVID-19: Copyright Implications of Remote Worship & Distance Learning*, by Kevin T. Richards.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10439, *Entry Restrictions at the Northern and Southern Borders in Response to COVID-19*, by Kelsey Y. Santamaria and Ben Harrington.

CRS Insight IN11335, *COVID-19's Effect on Interior Immigration Enforcement and Detention*, by Hillel R. Smith and Audrey Singer.

Critical Goods, Procurement, and Government Contracts

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10428, *COVID-19 and Federal Procurement Contracts*, by David H. Carpenter.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10424, *COVID-19: An Overview of Trade-Related Measures to Address Access to Medical Goods*, by Nina M. Hart.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10456, *Executive Order on the Food Supply Chain and the Defense Production Act: FAQs*, by Nina M. Hart.

Economic and Employment Issues

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10445, *Eligibility of Religious Organizations for the CARES Act's Paycheck Protection Program*, by Valerie C. Brannon.

CRS In Focus IF11487, *The Families First Coronavirus Response Act Leave Provisions*, by Sarah A. Donovan and Jon O. Shimabukuro.

CRS In Focus IF11519, *The Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Federal Employee Leave*, by Sarah A. Donovan and Jon O. Shimabukuro.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10442, *Recovery Rebates and Unemployment Compensation under the CARES Act: Immigration-Related Eligibility Criteria*, by Ben Harrington.

CRS Insight IN11320, *CARES Act Eviction Moratorium*, by Maggie McCarty and David H. Carpenter.

CRS In Focus IF11500, *The CARES Act: Implications for Tribes*, by Mainon A. Schwartz.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10434, *COVID-19 Response: Constitutional Protections for Private Property*, by Sean M. Stiff.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10435, *The Federal Reserve's Legal Authorities for Responding to the Economic Impacts of COVID-19*, by Jay B. Sykes.

Public Rights and Services

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10447, *Constitutional Considerations of Remote Voting In Congress*, by Todd Garvey.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10437, *The Courts and COVID-19*, by Joanna R. Lampe.

CRS Insight IN11344, *The Federal Judiciary and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act")*, by Joanna R. Lampe and Barry J. McMillion.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10425, *Postponing Federal Elections and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Legal Considerations*, by Jacob D. Shelly.

Criminal Matters

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10446, *An Overview of Federal Criminal Laws Implicated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*, by Peter G. Berris.

CRS Legal Sidebar LSB10449, *COVID-19, Digital Surveillance, and Privacy: Fourth Amendment Considerations*, by Michael A. Foster.

CRS Report R46297, *Federal Prisoners and COVID-19: Background and Authorities to Grant Release*, by Nathan James and Michael A. Foster.

Author Information

Caitlain Devereaux Lewis, Coordinator
Section Research Manager

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of

Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.