

Court upholds New Hampshire's ban on large gatherings

By **Kathy McCormack, Associated Press**

Posted Mar 20, 2020 at 3:00 PM

CONCORD — A judge refused on Friday a request to halt New Hampshire's ban on gatherings of 50 people or more, and the state Department of Employment Security took steps to deal with a surge of unemployment claims. A look at the effects of the coronavirus in New Hampshire.

COURT CHALLENGE

A judge upheld New Hampshire's statewide emergency ban on gatherings of 50 people or more to prevent the spread of the coronavirus,

Three people who planned to attend political and religious events in the next few weeks filed a lawsuit Tuesday, the day after Republican Gov. Chris Sununu issued the order prohibiting large gatherings for social, spiritual and recreational activities. They said the order violated their constitutional rights. A spokesman for Sununu said order was consistent with actions taken across the country and is clearly within the governor's authority.

Judge John Kissinger, in upholding the ban, wrote he "cannot imagine a more critical and important public objective than protecting the citizens of this state and this country from becoming sick and dying from this pandemic."

Kissinger did recognize the declaration is for a limited time and that statute allows the Legislature to address constraints on the governor exercising his power. He also said, should the situation change at some point, "the doors to the court are open."

THE NUMBERS

More than 40 people have tested positive in New Hampshire for COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough, and the vast majority recover. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, or death.

SURGING UNEMPLOYMENT

The unprecedented number of people applying for unemployment benefits in New Hampshire has slowed down the Department of Employment Security's computer system.

Sununu issued an executive order Tuesday allowing a broad group of people affected by the virus to request unemployment benefits, including those who are self-employed or who unable to work because they are caring for children whose schools are closed. After a surge in claims, the state is now asking people to file claims at certain hours, based on the first letter of their last names.

The details are at [nhes.nh.gov](https://www.nhes.nh.gov).

The Associated Press receives support for health and science coverage from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Coronavirus: Your questions, your stories

Seacoastonline.com and Fosters.com are looking for input from our readers.

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Do you have questions about the local coronavirus COVID-19 response you would like answered? Has the virus caused issues in your school? Do you know of weddings or personal events being affected? Are you concerned about your kids' safety? Please share your ideas with us to help decide the most important stories our reporters can be doing as we cover this health crisis.

Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

- - -

•