



Voice of Reason

By Mark Wilson, President and CEO

FLORIDA
CHAMBER
of Commerce

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Securing Florida's Future

Restarting Florida's Economy the Right Way

Like it or not, restarting the world's 17th largest economy is going to be even more strategic, complicated and lengthy than the ramp down has been.

Each day I hear from job creators that are eager to hang an "open for business" sign in their windows, and for certain, restarting Florida's economy is weighing heavy on many as we all work to strike the right balance between staying safe, while also keeping workers paid, businesses from going under, and eventually, reimagining an even stronger economy.

While parts of the U.S. have reached their COVID-19 peak, according to the model most have been using, Florida's peak was recently moved up to April 21, then back to April 27, and has now just been moved back to May 6. The timing and process of reopening Florida will have more to do with the virus being contained and the spread slowing to near zero than any of us wish was the case. As we continue practicing social distancing and working remotely, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and over 150 local chambers of commerce have been virtually meeting for over three weeks already charting a path for restarting Florida's economy.

We were founded more than 100 years ago due to another health scare (albeit a very different one) – the cattle tick. It matters today for the same reason it did more than 100 years ago. Bringing the best thought leaders together to solve problems is not just an idea – it's the best idea – and the root of the Florida Chamber's existence.

The safety of Floridians continues to be our top priority, and certainly, we must be smart in the way Florida reopens and hangs the welcome sign. We do not want to be like Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore who began reopening their economies only to find a resurgence of cases, a secondary spread and, unfortunately, a redeployment of restrictions on commerce, gatherings, travel and more. I'm convinced Governor Ron DeSantis and his team understands that the reopening of the economy needs to be as surgical as the move to our current situation.

Friends, we simply have to get this right. Balancing the right health and safety outcomes with the right "re-start" is vital, and we're uniting business around the right measures.

Our research, gathered from some of the brightest minds in Florida and around the globe, shows that returning to work will likely be surgical, measured, vary by regions, industry sectors, the type and size of businesses, and more - all while balancing the health and safety of workers. We can all easily come up with wish lists, legislative agendas and our own timelines, but restarting the world's 17th largest economy can't be a PR effort or some sort of state level show of force. There are economic models that show, the wrong re-start approach, combined with too much relaxing of testing, could prolong our economic recovery into 2023 – yes, 2023.

With hurricane season beginning on June 1, Florida is in an even more unique position. Our traditional hurricane evacuation and safety steps simply don't mix with social distancing measures.

Restarting Florida's economy won't be as simple as flipping on a light switch. It will require methodical planning for potentially new processes, mandates or limitations for which there simply isn't an example to draw upon. And we must not allow a lack of resources, regulations that are not fit-for-purpose, and/or the fear of litigation to sideline efforts to safely and sustainably return to work and restart our economy.

With Florida's next strategic plan, Florida 2030, we are uniquely well positioned to lead this effort.

From day one, we've been connected with Governor Ron DeSantis, Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, AHCA Secretary Mary Mayhew, Florida Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, and the Small Business Administration to lead Florida's business-related relief efforts. From helping businesses better understand what an essential worker is, to the state and federal economic relief efforts to help keep workers paid and businesses from going under, and channeling N95 masks, ventilators and personal protection equipment from businesses all across Florida to front line healthcare workers, the Florida Chamber and the millions of jobs creators and employees it represents, has been singularly focused on connecting businesses to resources, healthcare heroes to equipment, and policymakers to data and their constituents' concerns.

And as we transition to restarting Florida's economy, we know there are measures Florida will need to take to protect public health while reopening vital economic sectors.

We don't purport to have all the answers, and that's why, along with this broad team of some of the brightest minds, input from over 150 local chambers of commerce and Florida job creators, dozens of leading trade associations and others, we're working around the clock to put Florida on the right path to restarting Florida's economy.

By uniting Florida's business community for good, we can AND WILL secure Florida's future by successfully restarting Florida's economy.

COVID-19 Resource Center: [Sign-up](#) to receive the Florida Chamber's daily COVID-19 Membership Update which will land in your email in-box around 10 a.m. each day. Also, stay up-to-date on all federal, state, and local information for businesses by visiting www.FloridaChamber.com/coronavirus.