

# CHRIS PETERSON

FOR UTAH GOVERNOR

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## **PETERSON FOR GOVERNOR CAMPAIGN CALLS FOR EXPANDED CORONAVIRUS SUPPORT FOR UTAH WORKERS, SMALL BUSINESSES, AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

*Utah government has made positive steps, but more should be done to address economic fallout from Covid-19 shutdowns; Emergency efforts to expand testing needed immediately*

Salt Lake City, Utah — Today the Peterson for Utah campaign issued a statement calling for expanded public measures to address the economic fallout from the COVID-19 virus.

“Our campaign applauds the important steps the Utah Governor’s office and the Coronavirus Task Force have taken to limit the spread of the dangerous COVID-19 virus. But more needs to be done to limit the serious health and economic challenges our workers and small businesses are facing,” said Peterson.

“Utah’s working people are on the front lines of controlling the spread of this epidemic. Workers in grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants, care facilities, and the transportation industry are all exposed to this serious disease. Too many people that we count on do not have reliable access to affordable health care and are not entitled to paid sick leave,” explained Peterson. “Our government needs to step up to protect not just the health of these Utahns, but also their livelihood.”

Peterson’s campaign called for quick action from the State in the following areas:

**Utah should establish an emergency public-private partnership to dramatically expand COVID-19 testing throughout the state.**

- Utah is home to world class companies specializing in detection of infectious diseases. Our state government and health care industry should leverage this expertise to ensure that testing is available to every Utahn who needs it.
- Working with the Insurance Department and any other necessary agency or business, the Governor's office should implement a plan to waive consumer cost-sharing or copayments for all medically-necessary COVID-19 testing and services related to testing. The waiver should include emergency room, urgent care, and office visits related to COVID-19 testing for the State's individual, small, and large group markets. The Governor's office should develop an emergency plan to provide free medically necessary testing to any uninsured Utahn, drawing on the State's rainy day fund if necessary.  
*-- "We can't wait for the federal government," said Peterson. "Utah should scramble an emergency testing plan in partnership with one or more of our own world class private companies such as [Biofire](#), [ARUP](#), and [Co-Diagnostics](#)," said Peterson. "Our government should ensure that our health care professionals have the tools they need to fight this virus."*

**Cut red tape and extend compliance deadlines to facilitate public health quarantines and social distancing.**

- The COVID-19 outbreak is hitting us at the same time as tax season. Some small business owners and taxpayers may need extra time for the paperwork. Utah's government should have the flexibility to adjust in a crisis. The Governor's office should issue an executive order extending the deadline for state income tax filing by 60 days for individuals and businesses unable to file on time due to public health concerns related to COVID-19 outbreak.  
*-- "No one should be forced to put their family's health at risk in order to complete their taxes by April 15<sup>th</sup>," explained Peterson. "Our government can help out by providing some flexibility to taxpayers."*
- The Governor's office should also task the Department of Public Safety's Drivers License Division and the Utah Tax Commission to implement a plan to automatically extend expiration dates for driver licenses, vehicle registrations, and inspection stickers.  
*-- "Our vehicle safety and emission programs are important for the public welfare. But expiration deadlines should be extended while Utahns take the sensible public health precautions needed to stop the virus," said Peterson. "Let's not spread COVID-19 to each other while waiting in line at the DMV."*  
*-- Marla Mott stated: "I am 82 and my license renewal is due. I had an appointment for this Wednesday. We are self-isolating I called the DMV and was told that there is no law to allow a postponement," said Mott. "I strongly urge the Governor to take action to further protect us at this time."*
- The Governor's office should also direct the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing to develop a plan to extend professional licensing related expiration dates and renewal deadlines for licensed professionals. These deadlines should be extended to facilitate quarantines and social distancing as necessary.

**Better leverage existing programs to help workers facing unemployment or health crises relating to the coronavirus.**

- Many Utah businesses are likely to face a dramatic economic downturn during the COVID-19 outbreak. These difficult economic conditions may affect many working families. The Governor’s office should work with state agencies to clearly explain to Utahns how programs including unemployment insurance, disability insurance, paid family leave, and workers compensation may provide critical resources to workers. This communication plan for Utah workers should include the following:
  - Utahns who have lost a job or have had their hours reduced for reasons related to COVID-19 may be able to partially recover their wages by filing an unemployment insurance claim. Utah’s unemployment insurance program provides temporary cash benefits to help workers to bridge the gap between jobs and help them become re-employed as soon as possible.
  - Utahns who are unable to work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 may qualify for Paid Family Leave (PFL).
  - Utahns who are unable to work due to medical quarantine or illness may qualify for disability insurance benefits.
  - If Utah workers are unable to do their usual jobs because they were exposed to and contracted COVID-19 during the regular course of their work, they may be eligible for workers’ compensation benefits.

*-- “Our government needs to reach out to struggling Utah workers to make sure they have access to every available opportunity to protect their employment and financial well-being during this crisis,” said Peterson.*

- The Governor’s office should direct the Utah Department of Workforce Services to ensure that the unemployment insurance program’s employment search requirements are modified or waived to prevent COVID-19 exposure for the duration of the crisis.

*--“Utah’s workers who are laid off because of the coronavirus outbreak should be able to count on quick and sensible processing of unemployment benefits to help them make ends meet,” said Peterson. “We need a clear plan for these workers to get help without risking exposure to the COVID-19 virus.”*

**Implement plans to safeguard consumers’ rights during the crisis.**

- The Governor’s office should direct the Division of Consumer Protection within the Department of Commerce to establish a COVID-19 plan to protect consumers from illegal price gouging. This plan should include: issuing regulatory guidance clarifying that price gouging during a public health emergency violates the Utah Consumer Sales Practices Act’s prohibition of unconscionable sales practices; establishing a hotline and email complaint portal where consumers and businesses can report illegal price gouging; sending immediate cease and desist

orders to businesses violating the law; and developing a plan in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General to legally protect consumers rights.

- The Governor’s office should work with the Judicial Council and Department of Financial Institutions to establish a temporary moratorium on residential evictions, home mortgage foreclosures, and wage garnishment.  
-- *“Now is not the time to make Utah’s homelessness problem worse by throwing Utahns out of their homes,” said Peterson. “We need to adopt sensible measures that give any struggling tenants and homeowners confidence that landlords and financial institutions will work with them during this crisis.”*

**Develop a last-resort, emergency plan that readies the State to establish public-private partnerships with hotels or other property owners to provide temporary medical facilities for quarantining, isolating, or treating individuals facing COVID-19.**

- Medical health professionals and scientists are uncertain of the trajectory of the COVID-19 outbreak. If the disease overwhelms our hospitals and other care facilities, the State should be prepared to adopt emergency measures as a last resort. California and other states have already issued executive orders preparing businesses and the public for this possibility. Utah may need to follow suit in order to save lives. A public-private program could also be used to alleviate economic fallout for Utah’s critical hospitality industry.  
-- *“With sensible social distancing practices, cancellations, and quarantines already in effect, I’m hopeful and optimistic that the worst effects of the COVID-19 virus will pass Utah by,” said Peterson. “Nevertheless, our government should stand ready to protect Utahns if the worst case comes to pass.”*

*Peterson concluded: “I’m confident that Utah’s government, business, and cultural leaders are doing their best to help Utahns stay healthy. Every Utahn should keep calm, follow the advice of health care professionals and experts, and remember to be kind to one another during this difficult time. And, our government should move quickly to limit the health and economic fallout from the crisis.”*

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To join the fight to protect the dignity of working families, Utahns are encouraged to visit [www.PetersonforUtah.com](http://www.PetersonforUtah.com) to learn more or <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/petersonforutah> to contribute.

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