

JOINT STATEMENT
EXPLANATION OF TENNESSEE PLEDGE AND REOPENING ORDERS ON SEVIER
COUNTY

As Sevier County and the cities of Sevierville, Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg, and Pittman Center begin the reopening process via Governor Lee's Tennessee Pledge, there is some confusion on how that process will work and why there may be differences between some counties in Tennessee.

In late March, the county and cities consulted with legal advisors and state associations on the authority of local governments to implement COVID-19 regulations. It was the opinion of the county and cities that only the State of Tennessee had the power to close businesses and quarantine individuals during a pandemic. On Monday, the state Attorney General released an opinion that confirmed our position.

The Tennessee Pledge dictates the reopening procedures for the State of Tennessee and its ninety-five (95) counties. Governor Lee signed Executive Order 30 on April 28, laying the framework for the state's reopening strategy. Within this order is the ability of the six counties that have their own locally run health departments and health officers to set directives separate from the Tennessee Pledge. These six counties are Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, Madison, Shelby, and Sullivan Counties. Sevier County does not manage the local health department; therefore, our reopening orders are set within the Tennessee Pledge and are consistent with eighty-nine (89) other counties across the state. Thus, Knox County may reopen types of businesses on a different schedule than Sevier County.

The governor's most recent order, Executive Order 30, dictates many of the basic components of the Tennessee Pledge. It prohibits the opening of some businesses such as barbershops, hair salons, bars, live performance venues, bowling alleys, theatres, race tracks, amusement parks, senior centers, and others. Also, it provides further guidance on returning to work, social gatherings, places of worship, etc. Although this order, including closures, are currently slated to last until May 29, the Governor has stated future guidance may allow the opening of currently closed businesses prior to that date. For example, the Governor is expected to announce in the coming days guidance allowing the reopening of barbershops and salons. Currently, Executive Orders 29 and 30 allow the reopening of restaurants, retail establishments, and gyms with additional state health guidelines. You can view all executive orders here: <https://sos.tn.gov/products/division-publications/executive-orders-governor-bill-lee>. Also, you can find more information on the Tennessee Pledge by going to www.tn.gov/governor/covid-19/economic-recovery.

Given our tourism-based economy, the county and the cities, along with our tourism and economic development departments, will be issuing further best practice guidance to our local businesses and organizations. We ask all companies to follow this additional guidance to enhance the protection of our citizens and visitors.