

# **New Economic Help Announced for Struggling Rhode Islanders: A summary of the governor's May 9 press conference**

Governor Gina Raimondo and Dr. Nicole Alexander Scott held their daily COVID briefing today at 1pm.

As the state moves into the first phase of economic reopening, the governor announced daily press conferences would no longer be the norm. Press conferences will continue at 1pm, but only Monday through Friday. The governor also announced the ability to get daily coronavirus updates via email from the state. Interested folks should go to the governor's website, [governor.ri.gov](http://governor.ri.gov), and click the blue button on the page that says "updates by email."

The state saw 210 positive cases of COVID since yesterday. There are 77 people in the ICU, and 56 of those people are on ventilators. There were 19 new deaths from COVID-associated complications. Four of those people were in their 60s, four were in their 70s, five were in their 80s and six were in their 90s. The total number of deaths from COVID-19 in Rhode Island is 418. The past week has seen a jump from 300 to 400 deaths.

Today Governor Raimondo announced three new measures to help with financially struggling Rhode Islanders. The Public Utilities Commission extended its order suspending utility shut offs through the end of May. Raimondo stated the bills will carry over, as it's only meant to provide relief, but she also noted that could change in the future.

Rhode Island has also partnered with a student loan advisory service called Summer. Its services are free for Rhode Islanders who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and are specifically designed for them. The governor noted student loan payments for some Ocean State borrowers were as much or greater than a monthly mortgage payment. Student loan payments will be tied to the amount of your income during the crisis. Interested Rhode Islanders should go to [meetsummer.org/covidrelief](http://meetsummer.org/covidrelief). Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA) is also suspending payments for its student loans for three months, starting whenever an application is approved. Go to [risla.com](http://risla.com) for complete information on how to apply. If your loans are through the federal government, the CARES Act reduced interest rates to zero and paused payments through September 30.

The governor also announced today, thanks to Rhode Island's federal delegation, a significant amount of money for food assistance is on the way. Farm Fresh RI and the RI Community Food Bank have been

approved by the USDA to start receiving grants. The two non-profits will soon begin sourcing, assembling and distributing 400 meal boxes a week to food insecure households across the state. Raimondo stated she hoped to see it increase to 4,000 a week over the summer.

*Motif* today asked the governor what measures were being taken to prevent an outbreak at the state house. The governor and Dr. Alexander-Scott explained masking and brand new cleaning protocols had been instituted. The governor added the General Assembly not meeting was the right thing to help prevent COVID-19 spread.

*Motif* also asked the governor what the plan was to ensure a sharp decline in COVID-19 rates in the Ocean State. The governor repeated her plan for reopening the economy, "The plan is to go slow," she said. "It's why I'm saying go slow." She acknowledged the state cannot perfectly prevent all future outbreaks, but they were taking the right steps to make sure the medical system can handle it.

*No press conference tomorrow, but Motif's summaries will resume when press conferences resume on Monday.*