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GREG HINZ ON POLITICS

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Pritzker: Businesses get sales tax reprieve

Amid the disruption caused by the spread of COVID-19, the state is allowing a two-month delay for tens of thousands of businesses to pass along sales tax proceeds.



GREG HINZ On Politics

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Gov. J.B. Pritzker at today's news conference.

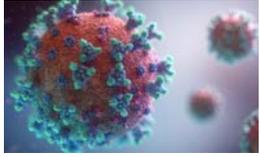
Gov. J.B. Pritzker says tens of thousands of businesses will get a two-month delay in when they have to pass on sales taxes to the state, a grace period given the disruption caused by the spread of COVID-19.

The move, which came after a [strong push from merchants](#), will help preserve liquidity from companies that now have little if any income, but still face expenses.

The sales tax deferral specifically will apply to 24,000 small- and mid-sized bars and restaurants, those that had to pay less than \$75,000 in sales taxes last year. Such establishments still will have to file returns for March, April and May, but will be able to withhold payment without interest or penalty, providing they make the payments in four chunks spread from May 20 to Aug. 20. Four out of five bars and restaurants statewide will benefit from the deal, officials said.

More news: [Unemployment claims](#) have risen to 64,000 over three days in the state, compared to 6,074 in the same period a year ago. A loss of 64,000 jobs in three days exceeds the total number of jobs gained by the Chicago metropolitan area in the past year.

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The governor also announced that, after receiving federal approval, [small businesses will be eligible](#) for low-interest loans of up to \$2 million.

Officials also updated state coronavirus figures: Three more people have died in Illinois, bringing the total deaths to four. The deaths include a Will County resident in their 50s, a Cook County resident in their 80s and a Florida resident who was visiting Sangamon County. Overall the state now has 422 cases, and the total is rising "exponentially," Pritzker said. Much, though not all, of the increase is due to expanded testing, with those results starting to show up in daily figures.

As for whether a statewide shelter-in-place order might be coming, as has been ordered in jurisdictions from suburban Oak Park to San Francisco, the governor said, "I'm looking at all of these things literally every day," adding that as of the moment, there has been no decision to issue such an order.

He pledged that major highways, drug stores and grocery stores will remain open. "There is no reason to hoard," he said. Stores throughout the metropolitan area have had their shelves stripped of everything from pasta and toilet paper to fresh bread and meat.

Asked about schools, which now are closed through March 31, Pritzker said no decision has been made but the state is following developments closely.

Pritzker also announced stores around the state will offer special seniors-only hours, so that he elderly can get what they need "without risk." The hours will vary by store, but generally will be in morning hours.

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