

Verde Valley Joint Statement

April 25, 2020

Dear Verde Valley residents,

There is not a person in the Verde Valley who can escape the effects of COVID-19. From job loss, to isolation from friends and family, to those on the front lines working every day to provide essentials, this is truly an unprecedented time. It's important that residents know that the local governments in the Verde Valley have been working together with state, county and federal officials, hospitals, first responders, schools, area non-profits and businesses during the pandemic response. Until a vaccine and or treatment is developed, the goal from the beginning of this pandemic has been to flatten the curve and to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19. Leaders in the Verde Valley are proud of residents for heeding the advice of the county health departments, Arizona Department of Health Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the White House.

Yavapai County reported the first COVID-19 case on March 19th. In the following three weeks, 60 additional cases were reported. However, with stay-at-home orders in effect, we have seen a flattening of the curve in and in approximately the last two weeks, only 15 new cases were reported, raising the total number of cases to 75. This progression proves that we have slowed the spread of COVID-19 in the Verde Valley. Coconino County has reported significantly greater confirmed cases of COVID-19 but very few in the small portion of the Verde Valley that is in Coconino County.

This indicates that communities need to start thinking about what the world will look like as we consider reopening. Here in the Verde Valley, we are working with the Governor on appropriate timing for reopening to keep public health as the focal point while balancing the needs of the business community and our local workforce. To be clear, there is not a specific date or timeframe for reopening. But that time will come so it is appropriate to start planning now. It is also unclear whether the state will provide a uniform approach or if individual communities will need to tailor reopening efforts to our local circumstances. Either way, the Verde Valley communities are committed to collaborating, sharing information and coordinating reopening efforts to the greatest extent possible. We are specifically committed to:

- Continuing to prioritize the health of our residents.
- Reopening businesses thoughtfully and carefully as soon as it is safe.
- Developing and disseminating safety guidelines for businesses and individuals.
- Continuing collection and review of data to support a fact-based approach.
- Continuing collaboration between all partners.

As stay-at-home orders are lifted, we understand some will be worried that this decision is rushed, while others will criticize that restrictions should have been lifted sooner. These decisions are not easy and are made only after extensive review of information on all sides of the issue.

As we plan the reopening of our economy, it will be important that businesses review and establish best practices in social distancing, hygiene and disinfection. And as businesses reopen, citizens are encouraged to take precautions to protect themselves and others. We will achieve balance between protecting residents from COVID-19 and returning to business prosperity only if each of us do our part. It is critical that the most vulnerable populations continue to avoid public spaces, and that masks, frequent

hand washing, strict hygiene practices and physical distancing are commonplace for the foreseeable future.

As it has been from the beginning, the response to COVID-19 will continue to evolve, and while no one can predict the future, we can take a careful and cautious approach moving forward. Each community will seek what approach is best for their unique needs, but know that the Verde Valley cities and towns are united in carefully reopening, once permitted by the Governor to do so.

Sincerely,

Verde Valley leaders including:

Charlie German, Mayor, Camp Verde

Doug VonGausig, Mayor, Clarkdale

Tim Elinski, Mayor, Cottonwood

Christian Oliva del Rio, President/CEO, Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce

Alex Barber, Mayor, Jerome

Kevin Savage, President, Jerome Chamber of Commerce

Sandy Moriarty, Mayor, Sedona

Lonnie Lillie, Chairman, Board of Directors, Sedona Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau

Randy Garrison, Supervisor for District 3, Yavapai County

Tom Thurman, Supervisor for District 2, Yavapai County