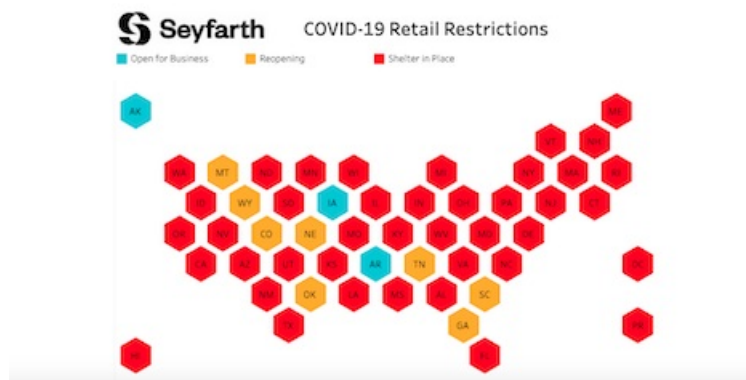


RETAIL

NRF, voice of US retailers, lobbies President Trump for uniform guidelines as stores gradually reopen

April 27, 2020



COVID-19 retail restrictions by U.S. state. Blue: Open for business. Yellow: Reopening; Red: Shelter in place. Source: Seyfarth, National Retail Federation

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The National Retail Federation has debuted its Operation Open Doors program as parts of the United States prepare to let stores resume business even as the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak is extant in North America, Europe and Asia.

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The program, accompanied by a new online solution center covers four functional areas for the U.S. retail sector: health and safety, people and personnel, logistics and supply chain, and litigation and liability. A lengthy letter from NRF addressed to President Trump lays it all out.

"As a community, retailers are preparing for new processes, consumer behaviors and legal requirements or restrictions, where there was once no playbook," NRF president/CEO Matthew Shay said in his letter.

"Our country must not allow a lack of resources, regulations that are not fit-for-purpose, and the fear of litigation to delay efforts to return to work and live safely and sustainably," he said.

Mr. Shay, in his letter, calls for consistent guidelines across all levels of government, without over-burdensome regulatory schemes. He stressed a gradual, phased-in approach to the reopening of the retail sector.

Washington-based NRF is the world's largest retail trade organization. Its member retailers have been the mostly badly hit sector in the ongoing COVID-19 prevention lockdowns, forcing furloughs, layoffs and some imminent bankruptcy filings.

Retail is the U.S.' largest private-sector employer, contributing \$3.9 trillion to the country's annual GDP. Per NRF, retail supports one in four U.S. jobs, or 52 million working Americans.

Here is Mr. Shay's letter in full:

April 26, 2020

The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Planning for and safely reopening retail and restaurant businesses including returning teams and associates to physical locations and welcoming customers back to stores and dining establishments is essential to a functioning and healthy economy. Representatives from all sectors of the economy are making recommendations to federal, state and local governments to guide the relaxation of stay-at-home orders and a safe return to work. At the same time, businesses of all sizes are working diligently on procedures unique to their business models and local conditions.

Perhaps no other industry will be as critical to our economic recovery as retail. Consumer spending comprises 70 percent of total GDP in the United States, and the complete retail ecosystem employs 52 million people 1 in 4 American workers. The U.S. economy entered the COVID-19 pandemic with sound fundamentals on the heels of a record-breaking economic expansion. Annual retail sales grew steadily over the past decade, with record retail sales during the 2019 calendar year and holiday seasons, and the Dow Jones Retail Index consistently outperformed the Dow Jones Industrials. Retailers are essential to the successful reopening of our economy and an eventual return to normal ways of life.

That's why NRF launched Operation Open Doors. Operation Open Doors will provide operational guidelines and considerations developed with input from hundreds of retail leaders who have joined this effort.

The Operation prioritizes four functional areas: health and safety; people and personnel; logistics and supply chain; and litigation and liability. These will inform the creation of reopening guidelines as more of America's retail sector gets back to work.

We have also created a new online solution center that offers guidance on policies surrounding dozens of critical topics. Reopening the retail sector and putting our economy back on track will require a gradual, phased-in approach; the smart, iterative strategies our members are building will help guide policymakers and business leaders as we work to restore the American economy. NRF is facilitating these discussions on behalf of the industry, soliciting feedback and complementing the efforts of our members and allied associations throughout the country.

NRF's retail leaders are primarily focused on customer safety, employee safety, and store and facility environment safety. Consistent guidelines across all levels of government without overburdensome regulatory schemes are critical. As the economy approaches reopening, we believe health and safety measures must include:

Social distancing and hygiene

Initial deployment of the minimal number of employees necessary to maintain physical distancing, fulfill customer orders and conduct government-recommended sanitization of high-contact areas. Retail workers will also prepare stores with signage, markings, plexiglass shields, audible announcements and/or other methods, as dictated by each store format, to support customer compliance of social distancing requirements. Standards temporarily limiting occupancy for customers based on total square footage and the National Fire Code may also be necessary.

Personal Protective Equipment

As public health professionals recommend broader use of PPE such as face coverings or gloves, we recommend governments provide flexibility, especially as employers and customers navigate equipment shortages. Retailers intend to provide, and many already are providing, PPE in line with CDC guidance for their employees' protection, but continued shortages are likely to hamper their efforts. As retailers endeavor to protect their employees and customers through use of PPE, similar responsibility should be incumbent upon Americans in public spaces while shopping.

Health screenings and COVID-19 testing

Some businesses may wish to screen employee temperatures when entering the premises. Certain COVID-19 symptoms track other ailments such as allergies, the flu or other common colds. Immunity of employees who have recovered from COVID-19 illness is possible, but the studies are ongoing and incomplete. Like PPE, thermometers

and diagnostic tests are in short supply. Federally consistent guidance, standardization of testing protocols and uniform documentation for employers will be critical to success. It will also take time to acquire equipment and establish protocols.

As a community, retailers are preparing for new processes, consumer behaviors and legal requirements or restrictions, where there was once no playbook. Our country must not allow a lack of resources, regulations that are not fit-for-purpose, and the fear of litigation to delay efforts to return to work and live safely and sustainably.

These are a few examples that will comprise Operation Open Doors. NRF will continue to revise and improve these protocols with guidance from national health experts, government entities and our retail members. We look forward to continuing our work with your Administration, other members of the Retail Industry Group and the Great American Economic Revival Industry Groups to reopen the economy.

Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to share these thoughts.

Sincerely,

Matthew Shay
President & CEO

National Retail Federation

cc:

The Honorable Mike Pence, Vice President of the United States

The Honorable Chad Wolf, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services

The Honorable Eugene Scalia, Secretary of Labor Administrator

Peter Gaynor, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Dr. Robert Redfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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