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Gov. Wolf May 11 Remarks on Staying the Course, Following the Law

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today updated the public on the commonwealth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, reminding Pennsylvanians that we must stay the course and follow the law in order to combat the deadly virus. The following are his prepared remarks:

We Pennsylvanians are in a fight for our lives.

The enemy is a deadly virus set on destroying us. Over the last two months, this enemy has infected almost 60,000 of our fellow citizens. It has killed almost 4,000 of us: our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors.

It has threatened to overwhelm our health care system. And, it hasn't finished with us.

Yet, over this past weekend, some have decided to surrender to this enemy. These are politicians who were elected to serve their fellow citizens. Others are business owners who have chosen to serve their customers by putting them in harm's way. These folks are choosing to desert in the face of the enemy.

In the middle of a war that we Pennsylvanians are winning, and must win.

Let me share a few facts with you.

We are indeed showing signs of success in this fight. We have begun to flatten the curve of infection in many parts of the commonwealth, which is why 24 counties have already moved into the yellow zone. And, 13 more will move into the yellow zone on Friday. That's over half the counties in the commonwealth!

Meanwhile, we have bought valuable time. This means we have not overwhelmed our health care systems. This means we have done a better job providing our heroic frontline health workers the materials they need to fight this deadly fight. This means we

have given our economy the time to increase the supply of tests to improve our chances to one day beat this enemy.

But the fight is not yet over. And, this is not the time to give up.

We have fought this deadly enemy in the best way we can. This war has called on every Pennsylvanian to fight. And we have – heroically. It has been a new kind of heroism – in many ways a quiet heroism. But a heroism nonetheless.

We Pennsylvanians have sacrificed in ways we could never have imagined. We have separated ourselves from our families. We have isolated ourselves in our homes. We have shuttered our businesses. We have closed our schools.

These heroic acts deserve to be met not by surrendering, but by staying the course. And that's what I intend to do.

To those politicians who decide to cave in to this coronavirus, they need to understand the consequences of their cowardly act.

The funding we have put aside to help with fighting this crisis will go to the folks who are doing their part. That includes our CARES Act funding, which will be used to support counties that are following the orders to prevent the spread, and the medical communities who are treating patients. However, other discretionary funding won't go to counties that put us all at risk by operating illegally.

To the politicians urging businesses to risk the lives of their customers or their employees by opening prematurely: they need to understand that they are engaging in behavior that is both selfish and unsafe.

To business owners: These politicians put you at risk of losing your health department certificate. They put you business owners at risk of losing your liquor license. They put you business owners at risk of losing your certificate of occupancy. All of these depend upon your doing everything you can to keep your patrons safe. And by opening before the evidence suggests you should, you are taking undue risks with the safety of your customers.

That is not only morally wrong. It's also very bad business.

Businesses that do follow the whims of local politicians and ignore the law and the welfare of their customers will probably find themselves uninsured. Because, insurance does not cover things that happen to businesses breaking the law.

Let me be clear: Employees that fear for their safety because a business has opened illegally, do not have to go to work. Instead, they can stay at home, stay safe, and collect their unemployment benefits.

Finally, the politicians who are encouraging the people they were elected to lead to quit the fight are acting in a most cowardly way.

This is not a time to give up. This is not time to surrender. This is a time to rededicate ourselves to the task of beating this virus.

The point is, we are fighting a war that has taken the lives of too many people. We are winning the war, but it is not easy. It calls for sacrifice. It calls for heroism of a sort we have never asked of ourselves before. And it calls for all of us to fight this war together.

We owe this to ourselves. We owe this to each other. I intend to keep fighting. And, I believe that the overwhelming majority of my fellow Pennsylvanians intend to keep fighting it too. And with that unity, I know we can win.

Thank you.