



Heritage Foundation Launches National Coronavirus Recovery Commission

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The Heritage Foundation on Monday unveiled a new commission intended to “save lives and livelihoods” in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

The National Coronavirus Recovery Commission “will examine the extraordinary public health crisis facing America and the steps needed to move prudently toward recovery,” the Washington-based think tank announced.

The commission—online at CoronavirusCommission.com—will be spearheaded by Heritage Foundation President Kay C. James.

Top experts and thinkers from the fields of public health, disaster response and relief, government, business, and academia, as well as the faith community will serve on the panel.

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They include Dr. Bill Frist, a former heart and lung transplant surgeon and former Republican U.S. senator from Tennessee; George Allen, former Republican U.S. senator and governor; and Timothy Flanigan, chief legal officer of the Cancer Treatment Centers of America.

Other commissioners are John A. Allison IV, retired chairman and CEO of BB&T Bank and retired president and CEO of the Cato Institute; Lawrence J. Blanford, former president and CEO of Green Mountain Roasters; and the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Ed Feulner, founder and former president of The Heritage Foundation, will also serve on the commission.

The first meeting of the commission is set for Thursday, with five additional videoconferences planned throughout April to address five specific questions.

Following the conclusion of the commission’s meetings, reports from each discussion will be compiled into a final report for policymakers, as well as for the American public, according to a Heritage Foundation statement.

“The experts on the commission will bring their specialized experience and expertise to chart out the path to best navigate our nation through this crisis, to determine when and how to begin to get Americans’ lives ‘back to normal’ again,” the statement says, adding:

The commission's work will consider two primary categories—crisis mitigation, as well as recovery and restoration—and answer important questions that will serve as a road map to America's post-pandemic future.

In the statement, James said the health of the economy is tied to the physical health of Americans.

“Good public health policy is good economic policy,” James said, adding:

Saving lives and saving livelihoods are part of the same road to recovery that we need to pursue today.

A physically healthy America is an economically strong America, so we need to think of them in concert, rather than as competing priorities.

The executive directors of the commission will be two of Heritage's own, Charmaine Yoest, vice president of the Institute for Family, Community, and Opportunity, and Paul Winfree, director of the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies. Both previously served in the Trump administration.

James told The Daily Signal that Americans should be able to get back to work in a variety of different ways once the coronavirus is under control.

“After we have slowed the spread of the coronavirus and expanded the medical capacity to treat more cases, we can start to reopen the economy,” James said, adding:

That may be done by region, business sector, or even groups of individuals, based on their risk factors, as these groups have been affected to different degrees.

We must also be guided by reliable data on COVID-19 infection and mortality rates.

Rob Bluey, vice president of communications and executive editor of The Daily Signal, will serve as the commission's spokesman.

“Americans are confronting one of the greatest challenges of their lifetime, and they are seeking answers for how we navigate through this crisis and toward recovery,” Bluey said, adding:

This commission will gather ideas from experts and the general public for consideration. We welcome contributions from the American people to make sure all ideas are considered and the best recommendations are ultimately made to our leaders.

The Heritage Foundation is the parent organization of The Daily Signal.