

## CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

*A weekly digest to keep you up to speed on the California coronavirus outbreak.*

April 28, 2020

Welcome to the seventh issue of C.A.R.'s Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter. Before we get started on the news from this past week, here are some updates on the resources C.A.R. has created to help you through this pandemic:

- The COVID Relief Hotline is extending its operating hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. today, April 28, through Friday, May 1, to coincide with the launch of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) in California. You can call 213-351-8450 during these hours, text 24/7, or email [covidreliefhotline@car.org](mailto:covidreliefhotline@car.org) for assistance with applying for PUA or with any questions you have on any of the financial relief programs available through the CARES Act.
- We released a [video series](#) walking you through some of the most frequently asked questions about Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Beginning at 8 a.m. this morning, the California Employment Development Division (EDD) will start taking applications for PUA from independent contractors and the self-employed.
- We are hosting several [webinars](#) this week on the PUA application process.

- We continue to regularly update our [Relief FAQ for Agents](#) and [Relief FAQ for Brokers](#) with new information as it comes in.
- We have created [two new resources for property management during COVID-19](#): a Quick Guide for Essential Services and Entering Units and a Quick Guide for Eviction Rules and Limitations.
- We updated our [Guidance for Employers During COVID-19](#).
- We are mobilizing to strongly oppose the newly introduced AB 828, an unconstitutional rent reduction bill that would effectively reduce rents by 25 percent. This bill extends further protections to renters during this crisis, beyond the eviction moratoria and halt on unlawful detainer lawsuits, while ignoring mom-and-pop property owners who still have mortgages to pay. [We encourage you to join with us to take action.](#)

## In This Issue:

- The Economy & Your Finances: Applications open for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)
- The Market & Industry: COVID-19 suppresses spring homebuying season
- Around the State: More testing needed before California reopens
- Health Check-Up: Coronavirus circulated in U.S. earlier than expected, FDA cautions against hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine as treatments

## The Economy & Your Finances: Applications open for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

This morning, the California Employment Development Division (EDD) began accepting applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Independent contractors will be able to file a claim for PUA at [UI Online](#), where you will be able to self-certify your income from the 2019 calendar year. While there are broad categories of eligibility for agents whose work is adversely impacted by COVID-19, it will still be necessary to meet

the criteria established by the State of California.

For those that qualify, the initial benefit payments will be the minimum amounts (\$167 per week of eligibility, plus the \$600 additional payment for certain weeks. After these initial payments, depending on your prior earnings, your weekly benefit amount may be increased. For more information, including eligibility requirements and initial payment schedule, see our [FAQ on Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#).

Last Friday, [President Trump signed into law an interim spending bill](#) allocating additional funds for emergency aid programs for small businesses, many of which REALTORS® are eligible for. The law allocates an additional \$310 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provides forgivable loans to small businesses; of that allocation, \$60 billion was set aside for community banks, credit unions and community development financial institutions, which are better able to serve smaller firms and minority-owned businesses. The Small Business Administration (SBA) [resumed accepting PPP loans yesterday at 7:30 a.m.](#) from approved lenders and has encouraged lenders to process the backlog of previously submitted applications. **These funds are expected to be expended very quickly. REALTORS® should consult with their accountants now to determine if they should consider applying for these loans.**

The interim spending law also allocated \$60 billion for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, to provide \$50 billion in loans and \$10 billion in emergency grants to small businesses, including REALTORS®. EIDL applicants who have already submitted applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis and do not need to reapply. According to the [SBA website](#), the SBA is not currently accepting new EIDL applications because it is still busy processing the applications submitted before the program's funding initially ran out. The website promises to provide further information on the availability of the EIDL portal to receive new applications as soon as possible.

For more information on both the PPP and EIDL programs, see our [FAQ on Small Business Administration Loans](#).

Last week, an additional 4.4 million people filed initial claims for unemployment, bringing

the total to over [26 million claims filed in the last five weeks](#). Of those claims, [3.35 million](#) were filed by Californians. The state has been approved to [borrow what will likely be billions of dollars](#) from the federal government to pay traditional unemployment benefits to unemployed Californians. The federal government is already responsible for the costs of the increasing weekly benefits and expanding the eligibility under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program authorized in the CARES Act.

As of last Friday, the IRS had delivered over [88 million stimulus](#) payments to taxpayers. If you are eligible and have not yet received your payment, use the [Get My Payment](#) tool provided by the IRS. If you encounter some glitches using the tool, [this Forbes article](#) aims to help troubleshoot them. Plus, [here's what to do](#) if you receive a check in the wrong amount. And last week, Governor Newsom signed an executive order [preventing debt collectors from taking stimulus checks](#) from Californians.

Remember to [always use caution](#) when entering sensitive information online: [Scammers](#) have already set up over 180,000 coronavirus-themed sites in order to steal data or misinform customers. The IRS will never contact you with information by phone, text, social media or email with information about your stimulus check or to ask for your Social Security number, banking information or government benefits debit card number.

Sources: NPR, U.S. Small Business Association, The New York Times, The OC Register, Los Angeles Times, CNN, Internal Revenue Service, Forbes, Federal Trade Commission, CNBC, ABC News

## **The Market & Industry: COVID-19 suppresses spring home buying season**

While home sales actually rose on an unadjusted basis in all California regions from February to March, the pandemic has [suppressed the start of the spring home buying season](#). March typically sees a larger uptick than was observed this year, causing existing home sales to fall on a seasonally adjusted basis by 11.5 percent. Thus far, the pandemic has had only a [modest effect](#) on home prices.

While statewide listings and pending sales are declining, the rates of decline have not been as steep as in weeks past. Southern California and the Central Valley even experienced their first increases in the number of new listings since C.A.R. began tracking daily data in early March, and the Bay Area has seen two consecutive weeks of increases.

National [new housing starts tumbled by 23.3 percent](#) in March, the biggest drop in nearly 40 years. In a survey from the National Association of Home Builders, 90 percent of respondents reported a [slowdown in remodel inquiries](#) and customers' willingness to proceed with a remodel.

Even with sales and construction down, Zillow reported that [page views on for-sale listings surged](#) sharply after falling by as much as 19 percent in mid-March. By mid-April, web traffic for Los Angeles- and San Francisco-based listings was higher than it was the previous year.

For current homeowners, [Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac](#) have announced they will start buying some mortgages that are in forbearance. The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) confirmed that [borrowers with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will not have to repay their missed payments in one lump sum](#). And Fannie Mae predicted the national mortgage rate could fall to [2.9 percent by 2021](#), an all-time low.

Meanwhile, real estate brokerages continue to explore ways to adapt to this new normal. Compass began [cutting wages](#), Keller Williams franchises are [reducing fees](#), and Engel & Völkers announced a new [partnership with Matterport](#) to provide all Americas-based agents with 3D tour technology.

Sources: C.A.R. Research & Economics, Los Angeles Times, CNBC, National Association of Home Builders, Zillow Research, Housing Wire, Federal Housing Finance Agency, REALTOR® Magazine, The Real Deal, Inman News

## **Around the State: More testing needed before California**

## reopens

On Friday, the national coronavirus death toll passed [50,000](#). In California as of yesterday at 9:50 p.m., [cases numbered 45,199](#) and deaths had hit 1,786. In Los Angeles County, the California county hardest hit by the pandemic with 20,460 cases and 948 deaths, COVID-19 is now the [leading cause of death](#). California is the fifth-largest outbreak in the country, behind New York (291,996), New Jersey (111,188), Massachusetts (56,462) and Illinois (45,883).

Governor Newsom maintains he has [no firm timeline](#) for when the state will reopen. While there have been [positive signs](#) indicating California is managing to flatten the curve, the state confirmed [more coronavirus cases](#) last week than any week since the pandemic began. Newsom has emphasized that [testing capacity](#) remains a major hurdle California will need to overcome before reopening. While it is [gradually getting easier to be tested](#) for COVID-19 — last week California became the first state to [recommend testing for asymptomatic people](#) living or working in high-risk settings — right now California is conducting an average of 16,000 cases per day. To consider reopening, that number must be raised to between 60,000 and 80,000. And California is [short on the testing swabs needed](#) to meet this goal.

Although some [protests](#) continue to crop up around the state demanding the reopening of California, a recent poll from the California Health Care Foundation found that [three out of four Californians want to stick with the lockdown](#) as long as is necessary. Even so, a [heat wave](#) over the weekend drew [thousands to beaches](#) in areas with more relaxed stay-at-home policies. Last week, [deaths doubled in Los Angeles County](#), and yesterday [several Bay Area counties extended their shelter-in-place orders](#) through the end of May.

Sources: NPR, Los Angeles Times, Mercury News, The New York Times, CAL Matters, Los Angeles Magazine, Mercury News, NBC News, The OC Register, Sacramento Bee

**Health Check-Up: Coronavirus circulated in U.S. earlier than expected, FDA cautions against hydroxychloroquine or**

## chloroquine as treatments

New findings from Santa Clara County revealed the [first county deaths](#) from the coronavirus did not come in March, as previously thought, but instead as early as February. Moreover, research suggests there could have been as many as [9,300 cases in San Francisco alone](#) by March 1. In New York City, antibody tests indicate as many as [one in five residents may have already contracted](#) COVID-19. The existence of these [hidden outbreaks](#) across the country confirms how fast the virus can spread undetected when social distancing orders are not in place.

On Friday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [cautioned against using hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine for treating COVID-19](#) outside a hospital setting. The FDA has received reports of serious heart rhythm problems in patients treated with these medicines and warned they have not been proven safe. Those using the drugs to treat [approved conditions](#), like malaria or lupus, should continue doing so. While there is currently [no approved medicine](#) for treating COVID-19, there are medicines that mitigate symptoms — see [this piece from \*The New York Times\*](#) on what to keep in your medicine cabinet.

Poison control centers have reported around a [20 percent](#) increase in calls about [accidental exposures to household cleaners and disinfectants](#). The [National Capital Poison Center](#) warns this is a “prime time for poisoning,” with hand sanitizer and cleaning products used frequently in close range of children, and encourages those who suspect a poisoning to contact Poison Control immediately by calling 1-800-222-1222.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Mercury News, The New York Times, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Capital Poison Center, CNBC



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