

COVID-19: ESSENTIAL BUSINESS TALKING POINTS & TIPS



ESSENTIAL BUSINESS CLASSIFICATION TALKING POINTS

- Economic hardship is hitting our industry —affecting more than 30,000 American jobs, and we need appropriate accommodations to continue to operate and provide jobs in our local community.
- We are taking COVID-19 very seriously and are implementing CDC guidelines on social distancing and sanitation to ensure the health and safety of our customers and employees.
- Many government programs won't begin for several days or even weeks. We need to be able to offer curbside pickup and fulfill over-the-phone and online orders to make ends meet during the crisis.
- In certain states, Governors' stay-at-home orders are arbitrary and capricious. Such orders should be tailored to address an appropriate COVID-19 response, but should not favor certain businesses and industries.
- Other states have granted premium cigars essential business classification, waivers, and have been allowed to offer curbside to-go purchasing, no contact sales, delivery, and shipping fulfillment.
- Several states have provided waivers to alcohol businesses or required businesses to add on essential products like dry goods in order to operate. Premium tobacconists are willing to make reasonable accommodations in order to support that sustainability of our businesses.
- All we ask is the opportunity to make accommodations to our business, but continue operating in a limited way while practicing proper social distancing, event restrictions, and other hygiene practices.
- Premium cigars can help support social distancing, whereby consumers can enjoy their passion in the comfort of their own home. Many enthusiasts acknowledge the relaxing qualities of enjoying a premium cigar and positive contribution to overall mental health.

As we discuss getting waivers, we must also look to tobacco tax payments & license renewals in states:

- Follow the lead of the federal TTB and suspend all state excise taxes.
- Waive all state licensing renewal fees.
- Automatically renew all State-Only tobacco Licenses.
- Extend the renewal date for all licenses for the retail sale of tobacco for 90 days, with possible extension for a longer period of time.

TIPS FOR SEEKING AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS WAIVER

- Focus on economic, community impact, small business jobs argument.
- Use your own employment and sales data to conceptualize the point. Provide a historical comparison of lost revenue this year comparing it to 2019 sales numbers.
- Provide additional supporting information, such as anecdotal examples of other industries and actions of other state and local governments.
- Provide a thorough, detailed explanation of the process you are using to provide “contact-free” sales to your customers. The more information, the better!
- Maintain an informative tone and do not complain in the submission form. Provide facts and convey the challenges and economic hardship in a respectful way. These requests are not a time to rant or add in commentary about other programs.
- Make a clear and concise ask to the appropriate authority. Many Departments of Health and Governor's Offices have online portals for submission and comment.
- Reach out to the Premium Cigar Association. Our regional representatives have established local contacts and can assist with these requests.