



From the Mayor's Desk

July 2020

The Path Forward

It would be an understatement to say these are troubling times for our country. The coronavirus pandemic has swept through our lives like wildfire. And the racism that has gripped our country long before it was founded over 250 years ago has come to the forefront once again. The time has come for our nation to face the racism that has divided our country for too long.

The greatest strength we have in America is the freedom of our citizens. Our country's Declaration of Independence states in the second paragraph: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men** are created **equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Clearly, every one of us has the right to expect to be treated equally—and respectfully.

Yet, still, the ugliness of racism remains in our society. As a white man, I expect to be treated with respect when a police officer pulls me over. I cannot honestly say I understand the racial prejudices that our Black citizens must deal with each day. The events that have occurred since George Floyd's death have again brought to the forefront the ugly reality of racism. We are better than this, and those of us in public office have a duty to listen – and to act – to do our part, however small, in righting the wrong that has been pervasive in our country for centuries.

The magic of the American system is that although we decide individually, we must act jointly, to make collective change. Eliminating racism won't happen overnight, but only by individually admitting and taking action to correct racism, will we be able to make our nation one that offers equality to all, no matter their skin color.

As you may know, on June 20, the City issued a [**Proclamation**](#) condemning racism and urging the Georgia General Assembly to enact hate crimes legislation. We wanted to make a strong statement that there is no place in our community for racism, hate and bigotry and to show our citizens we are committed to safeguarding their rights. We wholeheartedly supported the passage of House Bill 426 known as the Hate Crimes Bill, which was passed during this year's legislative session.

Dealing with COVID-19

When Gov. Kemp first announced the shelter-in-place mandate in early March, we adhered to those orders. Several months later, it appeared our efforts were beginning to pay off, restrictions began to be lifted and businesses began to reopen with a long list of safety protocols. But the recent news of a significant increase in cases prove this is not over. The reality is, COVID-19 is not going to go away anytime soon. We must all deal with it until an effective vaccine is found. We must not let our guard down.

Though we all may feel powerless, the CDC states there are a few simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy: 1) WEAR A FACE MASK when out in public, 2) practice social distancing, and 3) wash your hands thoroughly and often.

Just last week the nation's chief public health official, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, joined our governor in a "Wear a Mask" campaign to stress the importance of wearing a face covering when away from home. The Surgeon General pointed out during the tour that "wearing a face covering or a mask is not a restriction of your freedom. As a matter of fact, this is an instrument of freedom because we know if we wear face coverings, we will have less spread in our communities and more places will be open."

Of most concern is the steady increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Gwinnett. As of Thursday, July 7 there were 9,666 cases, 174 deaths reported in our county with 1,504 requiring hospitalization. These statistics are provided by the Gwinnett County Health Department and are updated weekly. While the county Health Director Audrey Arona has attributed the rise in part to the increased number of tests being administered, the fact remains, COVID-19 is spreading in our county.

This week, the City will be implementing a public service announcement campaign to remind and encourage each of us to do what we can to slow the spread of COVID-19. It's the right thing to do -- for you, for your family -- for everyone you come in contact with each day.

Be PTC Strong – Wear a Face Mask

Mike Mason, Mayor