

Georgia joins other states in cutting off federal COVID-19 unemployment benefits

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Capitol Beat News Service

Georgia is joining a growing number of Republican-led states in cutting off federal unemployment benefits to incentivize out-of-work employees to return to their jobs.

Gov. Brian Kemp said in an interview with Fox News last week that the Georgia Department of Labor will stop issuing \$300 weekly checks to jobless workers effective June 26.

The governor's remarks came three days after a coalition of statewide business organizations spearheaded by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce released an op-ed complaining companies can't find workers for a growing list of job openings because unemployed Georgians are receiving more in state and federal jobless benefits than they could earn by going back to work.

"It is hurting our productivity not only in Georgia but across the country," Kemp said. "We've got to get more people into the workforce."

Kemp and state Commissioner of Labor Mark Butler had been working on a plan to address the issue since earlier in the week.

"It is critical for us to support our economy and local businesses by providing solutions to the roadblocks many Georgians have faced

when returning to work," Butler said Thursday in a prepared statement.

"Right now, the state has a historic number of jobs listed on Employ Georgia. We are seeing some of the highest pay scales with enhanced benefits and signing bonuses."

But worker advocates panned the move to end the higher benefit amount, saying it is untrue that the extra \$300 each month has kept many jobless Georgians from seeking new employment.

Thousands of Georgians have already returned to work since the start of the pandemic last year, contrary to Kemp's claim that too many workers are still sitting on the sidelines, said Ray Khalfani, a research associate for the nonprofit Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI).

Even so, Khalfani stressed many Georgians are still struggling to find new jobs or return to their old ones after the pandemic battered the job market and killed many service-focused businesses, particularly for low-income and predominantly Black communities in the state.

"Although some jobs are returning, that doesn't mean everybody who wants to return to work can," Khalfani said at a news conference.

Among them is Elizabeth Knight, a Savannah resident who has received unemployment benefits since being furloughed from her

job as an employment specialist since November 2020. Knight said she has struggled to find new work in her career field while also caring for her young son.

"This unemployment is giving me a little bit of time trying to find out what's my direction," Knight said.

Beyond ignoring difficulties for many people trying to find new work, GBPI's Khalfani also warned Kemp's decision to end the extra benefit could drive more Georgians into poverty and depress consumer spending that was bolstered by the increased federal benefit.

"When you pull that floor from people who need time to be able to get back to the workforce, that's something that's going to hurt a lot of Georgians, hundreds of thousands," Khalfani said.

The \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package the president signed into law last month extends the \$300 weekly unemployment checks into September.

Responding to complaints that the checks are encouraging virus-wary Americans not to return to work, Biden said this week that anyone who refuses to take a suitable job will lose their unemployment benefits.

At least a dozen states with Republican governors have moved to cut off the federal benefits, including South Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee.



Retired Executive Director of the Lincoln County Development Authority John Stone (left photo, left) was also presented with a plaque by Chairman Walker Norman for his dedication and vision. Peggy Caruth (right photo, left) was presented a plaque by Norman, in appreciation of her service to the county.

Resolution honors Goolsby's life

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Ashmore Barden Road and Bass Road.

- Approved a special use request by Tim Brown of Brown's Properties for rezoning from R-2 to A-1 to allow for farming pursuits and an accessory structure.

- Audriana Whimbush received approval for a special use request to operate a learning center in R-3 zoning to provide early education to six children before they enter Pre-K. The learning center will be an accessory building on the property.

- Approved a request from Chief Judge Hal Hinesley to execute an updated contract for probation supervision services.

- Approved a request from Lincoln Leisure Services Director Nancy Blount to purchase a 26x36 carport and the pouring of a concrete slab at the senior center, at a cost not to exceed \$15,000. Blount explained that the cost of the project would be covered by grants from the CSRA Economic Opportunity Agency and CSRA Regional Commission.

- Agreed to enter into a lease agreement with Verizon for antenna and ground space on the county-owned tower located on Graves Mountain. Verizon would pay the county \$36,000 annually, to lease the space.

- Value Concept, Inc. was approved to provide Field Construction Management Services on the installation of the Verizon equipment at a cost of \$2,250.

- Gunby Communications received the green light to remove and replace the strobe lights on the county's second and older tower located on the mountain at a cost of \$13,923.

- Agreed to pay OnSolve, LLC approximately \$43,000, over a period of five years to continue the CodeRED Alert System.

- Approved a resolution to amend the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia 457(b) deferred compensation plan for Lincoln County employees and adopted the agreement to amend.

- Re-appointed Loucklin Ellis to serve on the Planning Commission for District 1 and approved Kay Light to fill the unexpired term of Jackie Cliatt on the Library Board of Trustees.

Commissioner reviewed departmental reports including the Office of Emergency Services which included calls answered for the month of April, at 120 transports, 51 EMS NPU's, and six fires, one rescue, with an average response time of 8.9 minutes.

The Lincoln County Recreation Department report showed that Little League baseball season will end on June 4. The recreation department will be working with Family Connection which begins its summer program on June 7.

Doss reported that the General Fund revenues are at 96.41 percent and expenses are at 83.38 percent.

The Lincoln County Planning and Zoning Code Enforcement Office report showed that 12 new single family home and one pre-owned manufactured home permits were issued; there were five re-inspection/renewal/penalty; two commercial permits; nine alterations/renovation/addition permits; 10 accessory permits; nine demolition permits; 16 electrical; seven HVAC; seven plumbing; five roofing; and three pool permits were all issued totaling \$10,608. for the month of April.

Public Works Director Roby Seymour also provided a breakdown of new residential building permits for 2021.

A total of 24 permits have been issued with six in District 1; one in District 2; 10 in District 3 and seven in District 4.

The Public Works Water Report

for the month of April showed a total of \$91,526.46 collected, which covers water, sewer, availability customers, setup, and tap fees.

The department installed five service connections and repaired six leaks on the system; performed continued maintenance on

hydrants, valves, and meters; performed locates for utilities; and performed maintenance on the Savannah Bay and Pointe Shores water systems.

The next meeting of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners will be at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 10.

SPLOST collections on the rise

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in at 104.74 percent, which is over what was budgeted for FY21 and total revenues are at 92.99 percent.

Bufford attributed the increase in revenues collected at over 100 percent to the collection of back taxes and the timely receipt of payments.

Expenditures are at 77.73 percent, "which is a good position to be in with 83 percent of the year complete," she said.

Bufford reported that there is \$4 million "cash in the bank," and the fund equity is at \$3.219 million. "The General Fund seems to be in pretty good shape," she said.

SPLOST collections are again up for the month of April, "\$71,189, is a good place to be," she said. If you look over the SPLOST history over past eight years, it has never been reported that high in the month April.

The balance of the SPLOST account is \$671,250.86 for the year, with the bond tax balance of \$378,897.86, and \$620,307.83 available for the future bond payments.

Dr. Light stated that the entire board attended "whole board training" last Tuesday, May 4, at Washington-Wilkes Board of Education office. An additional three hours of board training will take place at 2 p.m. on June 3.

Light also provided board members with a list of events and activities going on throughout the dis-

trict noting the Musical Theater's production is May 20-22 and that graduation is June 4. He informed the board that while attendance isn't mandatory, he wanted to make sure the board had a list of all the end-of-the-year activities.

After returning from executive session the board approved the following:

- Matthew Hayslip and Christian Wilder Jackson as teachers for the 2021-22 school year.

- Accepted the retirement of Bobbie Jean Hogan and the resignation of Sarah Rutledge Pullman.

- Agreed to supplement the contracts of Patty Arthur, Michael Williams, and Tonya Burt for the 2021 school year to 12-months for work done in the summer of 2020. These funds will be covered by federal CARES Act funds.

- Stephanie Goldman, Daniel Tankersley, Stephanie Jordan, India Freeman, Charles McDonald, and Lindsey Dunn will receive supplements to their contracts for an additional five days for the 2021 school year for work done in the summer of 2020. These funds will be covered by CARES Act.

- An additional \$2,000 will be added to the total athletic supplement fund for the addition of a new boys soccer coach.

The next regular meeting of the Lincoln County Board of Education will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 8.

Stargazers will get final chance to view 'supermoon' on May 26

The second supermoon of 2021 will appear on Wednesday, May 26, only a month after the first supermoon which appeared as a "full pink moon" on April 26.

Bob Berman, long-time and famous astronomer with the "Old Farmer's Almanac," offers up some great facts about supermoons, like what a supermoon is?

He agrees that it's a catchy word and anything that encourages us to explore the night sky is positive – but let's also get the facts straight.

According to Berman, generally speaking, a supermoon is a full moon that appears larger than a typical full moon due to it being closer to Earth.

However, there's a bit more to it than that. In fact, there are a couple definitions of "supermoon" out there. Let's go through the two most popular ones, which we'll refer to as the "broad" definition and the "strict" definition:

The broad definition is, that a supermoon is a new or full moon that occurs around the same time as perigee (the point in the Moon's orbit where it is closest to Earth). By this definition, there can be several supermoons in a year.

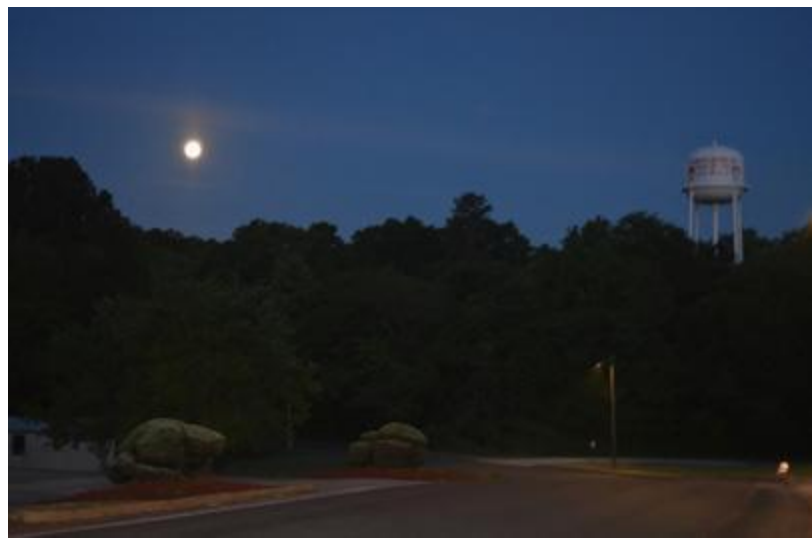
The strict definition is that a supermoon is the single closest new moon and full moon of the year. By this definition, there can be only two supermoons each year (a full moon supermoon and new moon supermoon).

In popular usage, most folks go by the broad definition, since it's much more exciting to be able to talk about multiple supermoons instead of just one or two. Plus, "supermoon" tends to refer only to full moons, rather than both full and new moons. (This makes sense, given that new moons are essentially invisible from Earth.)

Another measure that's used to determine if a full moon is a supermoon is its physical distance from Earth. The exact distance cutoff varies, but we generally adhere to the idea that a full moon occurring at a distance closer than 224,000 miles (360,000 km) is considered a supermoon.

According to the Almanac's broad definition there will be two supermoons in 2021. The one that appeared on March 26, the full pink moon, which was 222,211.7 miles from Earth and the second, the full flower moon which will appear at 7:14 a.m. on May 26. It will be 222,116.6 miles from Earth.

Going by the broad definition of the term (and ignoring new moons), there will be two supermoons in 2021.



The "pink supermoon" as it appeared in the pre-dawn hours on April 26.

May's full moon is particularly notable for two reasons:

1. It's the closest supermoon of the year, sitting at a distance of 222,116.6 miles from Earth—about 100 miles closer than April's supermoon.

2. It coincides with a total lunar eclipse in some areas, which means that it will take on a reddish hue during the eclipse's maximum. In other words, it will be a "blood moon."

The eclipse will be visible in only some parts of the world, unfortunately. If you're located in western North America, however, you're in luck.

Berman also answers the question, why do supermoons occur?

It all comes down to the fact that the Moon's orbit around Earth is not a perfect circle – in fact, it's an elliptical (oval) shape.

Because of this, the Moon's distance from Earth changes as it travels around our planet. Additionally, Earth doesn't sit directly in the middle of this elliptical orbit, so there are points in the Moon's orbit where it is closest and farthest from Earth. These points are called perigee and apogee, respectively.

- Perigee is the point in the Moon's orbit where it is closest to Earth.

- Apogee is the point in the Moon's orbit where it is farthest from Earth.

The Moon makes one full orbit around Earth in about 29.53 days, which means that it reaches its perigee and apogee points about once a month. When this occurs at the same time as a full moon, it's called a perigee syzygy—or, more commonly, a supermoon!

- "Syzygy" is the astronomical term for when three or more celestial bodies (such as the Sun, the Moon, and Earth) line up. When the Sun, Earth, and Moon form a syzygy, we experience a full or new moon, depending on whether the Moon is between the Sun and Earth or Earth is between the Sun and the Moon.

Although it has been all over the news in recent years, "supermoon" is not an official astronomical term. In fact, it didn't even exist until astrologer Richard Nolle coined it in 1979.

At the time, Nolle defined a supermoon as "a new or full moon which occurs with the Moon at or near (within 90% of) its closest approach to Earth in a given orbit." This definition is what most people go by today, though we tend to pay attention only to the full moon supermoons, since they're a lot more interesting to look at.

Given that a supermoon full moon is closer to Earth than a normal full moon, it does appear larger – about seven percent larger, technically speaking. This means that the difference between a full moon at perigee and a full moon at apogee can be up to 14 percent, which is significant.

Here's the key fact, however: Unless you were somehow able to compare a normal full moon and a supermoon side by side in the sky, it's nearly impossible to perceive a seven percent difference in the Moon's size.

Even if you could somehow place the year's biggest possible Moon (the perigee full moon) next to the smallest one (an apogee full moon) in the sky, you'd just barely tell the difference. And that's with the absolute extreme Moons.

The bottom line is that it's difficult to truly perceive any difference at all in the Moon's size from one month to the next, or one night to the next, so don't get your hopes up about seeing a gigantic Moon out there.

If you want to be guaranteed of seeing a huge-looking Moon, it's easy... Simply watch the Moon when it's rising or setting! A Moon down near the horizon will always look enormous, thanks to a well-known phenomenon called the Moon illusion, which makes our minds exaggerate the size of objects near the skyline.



Brooks harvests pumpkin in May

Nelson Brooks, gardener extraordinaire, submitted his photo of a recently picked pumpkin while holding up the May 6, issue of *The Lincoln Journal* as proof of its picking.

Brooks credits the harvest to his raised beds, black plastic, Norma McKinney's cow manure, an abnormally warm winter, rain at just the right times, and sweet onion flower pollinator attractors to his garden's early start this year. His waist high squash, shoulder high tomatoes, foot tall "so far" marigolds, head high green beans, and his pumpkins, also received a big boost when Brooks side dressed the garden with "Beggs' Best Brown" soil amendment.

Brooks thanked Brian, Kevin, and Wayne Beggs, Norma McKinney, and Mitchell Heard, promising to share his soon-ripe tomatoes. They have been slow to set due to the recent cool nights.

He also thanked the UGA Lincoln County Extension Service for testing the "Beggs' Best Brown" soil amendment, finding it needed no lime and a very small amount of 10-10-10. Brooks is confident his garden will soon produce beans, beets, cantaloupes, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, onions, tomatoes, peppers, squash, watermelon, and sweet potatoes.