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LA mayor says Washington sends mixed messages about COVID-19 reopening, though Garcetti partially lifts bans

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By **Juliette Fairley** | May 27, 2020



The White House in Washington, D.C. | Pixabay

Washington is sending mixed messages to Los Angeles officials about overly restrictive COVID-19 shut down orders, according to LA Mayor Eric Garcetti.

“One said we were going too fast and one signal from Washington said we were going too slow,” Garcetti said during a May 26 Facebook Live press conference. “I always listen to advice but we won't play politics with this. We will always look at the data.”

The Department of Justice reportedly sent a letter last week to Mayor Garcetti warning him about extended shutdowns, according to the **Los Angeles Times**.

"Reports of your recent public statements indicate that you suggested the possibility of long-term lockdown of the residents in the city and county of Los Angeles, regardless of the legal justification for such restrictions," wrote Civil Rights Division Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband. "Any such approach may be both arbitrary and unlawful."

As of May 26, there were 96,733 coronavirus cases statewide and 3,814 deaths, according to the **Department of Health**.

Mayor Garcetti has discretion so long as there's science behind the measures he's proposing for the lockdown and the goal of public health, according to First Amendment attorney Jeff Lewis in Rolling Hills Estate, Calif.

“The 10th amendment reserves matters of health to the States and the political subdivisions of the States so the federal government can't really impact the exercise of discretion by the mayor here,” Lewis told *the Southern California Record*.

Although the federal government may not have a legal leg to stand on in controlling Mayor Garcetti, according to Lewis, funding is leverage that the federal government wields over the state.

“I would expect the federal government to pull money if they don't play ball,” said Lewis.

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Mayor Garcetti has apparently heard the federal government's message loud and clear.

Yesterday, he lifted the ban on in-store retail shopping and religious institutions in the city of Los Angeles.

“Phase 3 is permitted with a state variance given to counties and the county took action to apply with the state,” said Mayor Garcetti. “That's where the in-restaurant dining, hair salons and barbershops fall under. We have to wait for the state.”

Gov. Newsom released **criteria** on May 26 for hair salons and barbershops to meet before reopening with conditions, such as wearing masks throughout services including haircuts, hair coloring, blowouts, weaves and extensions, braiding, lock maintenance, wig maintenance and hair relaxing treatments. However, shaving, facial waxing, threading, eyelash services, facials and manicures or pedicures at nail salons remain banned.

“COVID-19 is still present in our communities and we are still at risk,” said Dr. Sonia Angell, State Public Health Officer and Director of the California Department of Public Health. “As we venture outside our homes, it is critically important to keep physical

distance, wear face coverings in public, and wash hands frequently to help protect yourself and those around you."

Rules for opening barbershops and hair salons include:

- Physical distancing of six feet between and among workers and customers, except when providing haircutting and other close contact services.
- Symptom screening for all workers at the beginning of a shift along with vendors, contractors and other workers entering the shop.
- Support workers and customers who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 in staying home.
- Vet customers and cancel or reschedule customers at will who indicate they are ill.
- Face coverings are required throughout the service



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