



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daphne Jordan

Senator Daphne Jordan successfully advocates for the re-opening of golf courses

SENATOR DAPHNE JORDAN April 18, 2020

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Halfmoon, NY – Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I,Ref-Halfmoon) today announced that she has successfully advocated for the re-opening of golf courses to ensure that New Yorkers have more opportunities for safe, outdoor activity as New York remains on PAUSE. Senator Jordan also received detailed clarification last night from Empire State Development (ESD) regarding its recent issuance of guidance that golf courses could re-open, so long as certain social distancing conditions were met.

In response to requests for assistance from several area golf courses, and members of the Capital Region Golf Course Owners Association, on Tuesday, April 14, Senator Jordan sent correspondence to Governor Cuomo strongly advocating that privately-owned golf courses be allowed to resume operating. Doing so would allow these businesses to maintain some of their operations and provide New Yorkers access to a healthy form of exercise and outdoor activity that is in accordance with federal and state social distancing guidelines of keeping at least six feet of distance between individuals.

In her letter (attached with this new release), that was co-signed by Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh and Assemblyman Jake Ashby, Senator Jordan wrote the following:

“Many privately-owned golf courses are seasonal businesses facing a tremendous negative fiscal impact from the Coronavirus public health crisis and have shared their concerns... Prior to the state-mandated shutdown, privately-owned golf courses abided by professional guidance offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as the New York State Golf Association (NYSGA). That guidance included the implementation of all

CDC and state-mandated guidelines promoting safe, social distancing including no access to pro shops, locker rooms, indoor facilities and restaurants/bars (unless for take-out purposes only), and no transactions of money, credit cards, or other payment for purpose of play, equipment and/or merchandise. In addition, these guidelines featured specific provisions regarding social distancing on the golf course that included staying at least 6 feet away from others, not shaking hands before or after a game, leaving the flagstick in the hole, removing rakes and ball washers from course, not sharing clubs or any other equipment, and limiting golf cart use to one person.”

“During this difficult time, the need for physical exercise and, frankly, a positive diversion provided by a beloved sport such as golf – done in a careful manner with proper social distancing – is important. Our state needs to allow opportunities for individuals to engage in a safe, athletic outlet such as golf for their physical, mental, and emotional health and personal wellbeing. Allowing privately-owned golf courses to remain open will also ensure that staff is available in the event individuals attempt to illicitly use a course without proper supervision. The CDC and NYSGA have established common-sense guidelines for golf courses to remain open that should inform ESD’s decision-making going forward. We respectfully request that you revisit the decision to include privately-owned golf courses as part of the New York on PAUSE directive. Golf courses are businesses that can safely re-open and begin a much-needed start of the necessary effort to get New York’s economy moving forward again.”

On Friday afternoon (April 17), after Senator Jordan had sent her letter earlier in the week, ESD issued updated guidance regarding the operations of privately-owned golf courses

(below):

“Golf courses are not essential and cannot have employees working on-premise; notwithstanding this restriction, essential services, such as groundskeeping to avoid hazardous conditions and security, provided by employees, contractors, or vendors are permitted and private operators may permit individuals access to the property so long as there are no gatherings of any kind and appropriate social distancing of six feet between individuals is strictly abided.”

When some area golf courses indicated that they found ESD’s ruling ambiguous, Senator Jordan again corresponded with ESD Friday evening (April 17), asking for further clarity regarding the ruling and its practical impact. ESD responded to Senator Jordan’s request with more information and clarity (below):

“First and as always social distancing protocols and all federal, state and local health and safety guidelines must be adhered to. ... the new guidance doesn’t prohibit private golf course from allowing people on the course. It also doesn’t prohibit the activities the course ownership can allow on their course. This is being widely interpreted to include golfing... If individuals can access and use carts without the need of course employees than that also should be fine. So, with all the proper social distancing, no employees (other than security and limited grounds keeping) on site, recreational uses on private golf courses, including golf would be in compliance.”

Accordingly, as per ESD's ruling, golfers may once again access golf courses so long as proper social distancing is maintained, a positive outcome that Senator Jordan had advocated for on April 14 in her original correspondence to the Governor.

"I'm pleased that the Governor and ESD were so responsive to my advocacy. Now, golfers can once again enjoy a healthy outdoor recreational activity and our golf courses will be able to maintain a semblance of their operations. I am hopeful that this is the beginning of a larger, necessary effort to re-open New York, especially upstate. While we have to remain careful and use common sense to protect ourselves and our fellow New Yorkers from the Coronavirus, small victories such as this bring us another step closer to re-opening our small businesses and communities, getting more workers back on the job, and restoring our economy to help the millions of people who have lost their job and are losing hope. We will get through this and it begins by re-opening New York and moving forward, together," Senator Jordan said.

A copy of Senator Jordan's correspondence to the Governor where she successfully advocated for the re-opening of golf courses is attached with this news release.

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