**Cloth Face Coverings in Public**

Many have begun contacting our office regarding cloth face coverings and whether or not ordering them to be worn in public is a constitutional overreach on the part of state and local governments. The answer is simple. This is a constitutional overreach in the same way that stay-at-home orders are. Constitutional tests include the following: what is the compelling interest and what is the least restrictive option. These are the same questions being asked regarding all government mandates in response to COVID-19.

[SEE constitutional review article for detailed analysis.](https://www.ncll.org/news-alerts/mississippi-church)

A parallel example to mandated face coverings is forcing individuals to wear automobile seatbelts. This would also be a constitutional overreach, but it has been tolerated in many states for the purpose of saving lives. The compelling interest is to save the lives of those in car accidents, and the restriction is not an undue burden.

As the country begins to open back up in May, cloth face coverings are being relied upon by many governors and municipalities to manage the spread of COVID-19. This should be evaluated as we work to open up businesses and churches again in our community.

From a church perspective, it is recommended that your church greeting team, parking lot attendants, and ushers wear masks to help your congregants realize you are taking the crisis seriously. This will help your church gather in a safe way, minimizing liability while maximizing ministry. This extra step helps ensure that as we meet again in person we go the extra mile to keep people safe.

If you have any questions about cloth face coverings or other mandates, please contact our office at 888-233-6255 or by email at info@ncll.org.

**States requiring or suggesting cloth face coverings in public:**

**Recommended:** Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Delaware | Florida | Georgia | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Mexico | North Dakota | Northern Mariana Islands | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | South Carolina | South Dakota | Texas | Utah | Virgin Islands | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming

**Mandatory:** Colorado\* | Connecticut | District of Columbia\* | Guam\* | Hawaii\* | Maryland\* | New Hampshire\* | New Jersey\* | New York\* | North Carolina\* | Pennsylvania\* | Puerto Rico | Rhode Island\* | Vermont\*

\* Colorado: Essential business employees

\* District of Columbia: For employees and patrons in retail food sellers, hotels, and taxis/rideshares

\* Guam: Essential business and government agency employees and patrons while on premises

\* Hawaii: Essential business employees and patrons while on premises

\* New Jersey: Essential business employees and patrons while on premises and workers and customers in public transit

\* New Hampshire: Mandatory when entering a health care facility

\* New York: In all situations when social distancing is not possible; employers must provide to essential workers when directly interacting with the public

\* North Carolina: Mandatory for employees in nursing homes

\* Pennsylvania: Essential business employees and patrons while on premises; employers must provide to essential workers

\* Rhode Island: Essential business employees and patrons while on premises; employers must provide to essential workers

\* Vermont: Essential business employees