

## BLOG

# Local Officials Are the Key to Implementing Our National Response to the Coronavirus

By [John Paczkowski](#), [Witt O'Brien's](#) Mar. 20, 2020



There will be few if any jurisdictions, economic sectors or segments of our society left untouched by the rapidly spreading COVID-19. The disease respects no boundaries, class-distinction or gender preference. Every elected and appointed government leader is on the frontline of guiding their constituents through this uncertain and challenging time.

Notwithstanding the national and worldwide nature of this crisis, the actions of county and city executives, state and territorial governors, and tribal leaders will be a key determining factor in deciding the overall success or failure of our collective effort.

Though some officials have prior experience with major disasters, virtually none have had to deal with what we now face or the significant social and economic impacts sure to follow. Nonetheless, they are bravely stepping up to communicate, focus and organize our response; and lead they must. Though our health and public safety teams are well prepared for other types of crisis, they have never confronted one of this nature or scale. Those professionals and the public at-large all depend greatly on the quality and strength of leadership from our public officials who need our utmost support.

A major crisis like this at the national level largely involves setting policy, mobilizing resources and managing massive logistics to see that those resources get to where they are needed most. Though daunting enough, the real work of coordinating operations and inspiring individual and community action now largely falls on the shoulders of our county, city, state, territorial and tribal leaders. They are the essential glue that binds national resolve with individual and community action. It is up to them to be candid in assessing needs, quickly identify gaps and be forceful in obtaining the support they require.

There are a few vital things that public officials should pay special attention to as they lead through this crisis:

1. Well-crafted public communications to inform, inspire and influence those they are sworn to protect

2. A bias for stakeholder inclusion to shape and foster the public buy-in needed for collective action
3. Incident management organization, planning and coordination vital to implementing their intent
4. Immediate access to public health and emergency medical advice to help make key policy decisions
5. Continuity of government and other services important to the public's health, safety and wellbeing

Our country has faced danger on a global scale before and we have endured. We will not only endure this crisis but will also emerge better and stronger than before. It is time to give our elected and appointed public officials, at all levels of government, our very best thinking and professional expertise. The United States is blessed with the finest health, safety and emergency management professionals in the world. We are all engaged and ready to do what is needed.

Remain strong, stay the course and lead us forward!

## **ABOUT JOHN PACZKOWSKI** [\(Full Bio\)](#)

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John is a Senior Managing Director for Witt O'Brien's leading key strategic initiatives for our public sector practice areas. John has served as a public-sector executive, consulting professional, and former Marine Corps officer.



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