As confirmed by a spokesman for Speaker Schexnayder, the Louisiana legislature passed resolutions to suspend its business until March 31. This comes after a series of increasingly tough restrictions on public gatherings and commercial activity were announced including the closing of casinos and video poker truck stops until April 13.

This puts a hard stop on all bills until legislators come back later this spring. Once they return, they will immediately begin working through a large backlog of legislation, including the yet-to-be-finalized budget. With increased costs due to emergency responses and decreased revenues due to the economic impact of the pandemic and low oil prices, the budget debate will be particularly challenging this year. As a non-fiscal session, legislators will have limited options on increasing revenues, but many will be looking to grab every dollar possible.

The legislature might reconvene for an accelerated budget process and then adjourn, with a special session scheduled for later in the year to address remaining business (potentially including economic recovery). Should this be the case, there will almost certainly be a fight for control over the breadth of topics that can be covered. Both the legislature and the governor can call a special session though the legislature never has — and they will likely be approaching the call with differing priorities.
special session can last no more than 30 days, so whatever topics are included will have to move at breakneck speed.

In view of the foregoing, it currently is anyone’s guess as to whether the legislature will take up any of the sports betting and other gaming bills that have been introduced, much less adopt them.

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