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**NEWS RELEASE:** (For immediate release – Monday, March 16, 2020)

**Governments declare local emergencies in response to the public health concerns related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Effective March 12, 2020, Governor Ralph S. Northam declared under the Executive Order that a State of Emergency exists in the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the potential spread of COVID-19, a communicable disease and public health threat.

In response to this Executive Order, today Botetourt County, City of Roanoke, City of Salem, Roanoke County, and Town of Vinton governments took the precautionary measure of declaring local emergencies. The action enables the local governments to request state and federal resources should they become needed. Per the Virginia Department of Health, at this time, there are no confirmed cases of coronavirus in our region.

The purpose of this emergency declaration is to give the local governments legal authority and flexibility to mobilize resources in response to this unprecedented public health threat for the protection of the communities. The action will also help ensure critical services and operations continue. Additionally, it allows the local governments to request mutual aid from regional, State, and other governmental entities.

A joint statement from local leaders:

- Botetourt County Administrator Gary Larrowe
- City of Roanoke Manager Bob Cowell
- City of Salem Manager Jay Taliaferro
- Roanoke County Administrator Dan O’Donnell
- Town of Vinton Manager Barry Thompson

“Our top priority is protecting the health and safety of our residents. You can be assured that we, along with our elected officials, staff and particularly our public safety personnel, are actively engaged in monitoring and having discussions related to the Coronavirus pandemic. In this current environment, we will continue evaluating the way in which we provide services to the public. Our communities should be prepared for any adjustments, postponements, and cancellations that go into effect as we work together as a region to keep everyone safe. Thank you for your patience and anticipated cooperation.”

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