



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

COVID-19 PRESS BRIEFING
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Good afternoon.

I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to listen to these online briefings each day.

As we have been discussing in these daily updates, Missouri and the nation are facing an unprecedented public health emergency.

Across the country, COVID-19 is not only a threat to our health. It's putting people out of work, closing schools, and changing the way we live our lives.

I want Missourians to know we are doing everything we can to protect public health, support our citizens, and respond to COVID-19 in every way possible.

That is why I have now requested that President Trump approve a major disaster declaration for the entire state of Missouri. A federal disaster declaration will help relieve the costs local governments are facing and will continue to face in the weeks ahead.

Although the situation is still developing, it's already clear COVID-19 will have a more sweeping impact across the entire state than any other disaster we have dealt with in our lifetimes.

I have requested President Trump to approve Disaster Unemployment Assistance to help the many people who we know will be out of work for some period of time. I've also requested federal assistance for Crisis Counseling for our local mental health providers supporting Missourians dealing with the strain of COVID-19.

And to help our local governments and non-profit agencies, I have requested federal assistance with the costs for first responders and other emergency expenses.

Yesterday, we also told you about the \$18 million dollars from our state budget I directed to supply PPE for hospitals and first responders.

I want to assure Missourians that each day, we will continue to do everything in our power to adapt to this challenge and protect the people of our state.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis will have a serious impact on our economy.



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The impact on Missouri businesses and nonprofit organizations has already been extreme.

As we said on Monday, our request for assistance through the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program has been approved. This will make low interest disaster loans available statewide to small businesses and private, non-profit organizations severely impacted by COVID-19.

The Missouri Department of Economic Development has also been actively reaching out to business leaders across the state to see how they can assist during this challenging time.

DED is also exploring other creative ways to contribute to our COVID-19 response efforts, such as repurposing Community Development Block Grant funds.

Director Rob Dixon is here today and will share more details about actions the Department is taking.

In addition to DED, the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is also taking steps to assist the many businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19.

In just the past week, the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations has received nearly 30% of the total number of unemployment claims filed in 2019.

To assist businesses and workers impacted by this public health crisis, the Department is allowing temporary flexibility in the unemployment insurance program relating to the work search requirement, the one-week waiting period, and the charging of COVID-19 related claims.

Director Anna Hui will share more details about these temporary measures.

As the COVID-19 crisis develops each day, Missouri's food supply has become another area of growing concern. On Monday, I assured you that Missouri's food supply IS strong.

Agriculture plays a vital role in taking care of our most basic needs during a public health emergency, and the Missouri Department of Agriculture has been working closely with its partners to maintain our strong food supply chain.

Director Chris Chinn and her team have heard from farmers, ranchers, and agriculture leaders that they are ready to respond to COVID-19.

Yesterday, I approved a request from DHSS Director Dr. Randall Williams to create a consistent directive across local governments for any individual or business that is part of the food supply chain.



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Farmers, ranchers, agriculture businesses, and grocery stores are encouraged to continue essential business functions to feed our citizens.

This guidance supports the list published last week by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security identifying the food and agriculture industry as critical infrastructure during the COVID-19 response.

Farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses are critical pieces of our society at all times ... but especially right now.

These are unprecedented times. I want every worker and employer involved in the food industry to know that your work has never been more important.

Obviously, employee safety and public safety are our first priority. If you are sick, stay home.

However, if you are able to work, we need you at your farm, at your truck, at the grocery store, and everywhere else to keep doing your job and keep our farm products on America's shelves.

Our food supply is as strong as the men and women who drive our trucks and tractors. Your efforts through these difficult times will sustain our communities and our nation.

Now, I will turn it over to Director Karsten for a Public Safety update.

(DIRECTOR KARSTEN SPEAKS)

Thank you, Director Karsten. We'll now have Director Dixon provide an economic development update.

(DIRECTOR DIXON SPEAKS)

Thank you, Director Dixon. Now for a Department of Labor Update from Director Hui.

(DIRECTOR HUI SPEAKS)

Thank you, Director Hui. Lastly, we'll have Director Chinn give an update on agriculture.

(DIRECTOR CHINN SPEAKS)

I want to thank all of my directors and their departments for working so hard every day to help us find solutions during this time of crisis.

I also want to thank all Missourians for doing what they can to help fellow citizens in need.



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I am so impressed by how Missourians are adapting and pulling together in the face of this challenge.

From volunteering to help the elderly to sewing surgical masks for hospitals, ordinary Missourians are responding fearlessly during this emergency. Not just healthcare professionals and our first responders, but supermarket workers, truckers, and delivery workers.

They are all working long hours and making a difference for all of us.

As I said yesterday, the reality is that we still have to have people out there every day providing services to the people who are fortunate enough to stay home.

But again, for those who CAN do their jobs remotely and don't have to get out, please continue to stay home. By staying home, you are helping everyone.

I know many people are wondering when this is going to end, and as much as we all wish there was an answer, I can't tell you when this is going to end.

But I can tell you that the more people stay home, the sooner COVID-19 will be contained and the sooner we can overcome this challenge.

Together, we will win this battle.

Thank you.