



**NEVADA
HEALTH
RESPONSE**

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Governor Sisolak announces new directive for nonessential businesses

Las Vegas, NV — Today, Governor Steve Sisolak signed a new emergency directive to order non-essential businesses to close. This is the third directive he has signed since declaring a state of emergency.

This is follow-up measure to Nevada Health Response COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Initiative, which the governor announced on Tuesday, March 17.

"Previously, I asked non-essential businesses to close their doors to the public. I am no longer asking them to do that," said Gov. Sisolak. "I am directing all non-essential businesses to close. I repeat. If you are NOT an essential business, I am using my power as Governor under an emergency declaration to order you to close. I am signing a new emergency directive, the third I've signed since declaring a state of emergency."

The Governor's prepared remarks were as followed:

Good afternoon.

I'm standing here before you today because as this situation develops, we must evolve with it-- we must grasp the gravity of the reality we find ourselves in as we battle our invisible enemy-- COVID-19. This is a pandemic of devastating proportions and we need to respond with the appropriate, decisive measures.

On March 5, we had our first presumptive positive case of COVID-19. On March 17th when I urged businesses to close their doors, we had 64 cases. Today, we have now skyrocketed to 109 cases -- our positives have gone up 70% in 3 days -- and one of our own Nevadans has died. And because this developed in other countries and states before arriving in Nevada, we don't have to guess at what comes next: the rapid increase in

positive cases will continue. The numbers aren't slowing down, and we have not yet reached our apex.

And like other states, we don't have enough test kits to know the full scope. Test results are only a snapshot of how many tests are completed -- they do not account for all those that are likely walking around with this virus who don't even know it because they aren't showing symptoms yet.

And despite countless calls and around-the-clock work to push for, and even beg, the federal government for additional test kits and supplies, the NV Division of Public & Behavioral Health received a notice yesterday that all of Nevada's requests to the federal government regarding drive-thru swab testing pods, swab test kits, and testing reagent kits are on an indefinite backlog without any estimate of a timeline for delivery. This is our unfortunate reality, Nevada. It's up to us. While we look to access federal and state resources, I also know that when I make more calls over the coming days for support and resources from our community partners, you will step up.

The State's health and emergency management team is moving forward to protect public health through every appropriate means at their disposal including by accessing the open market. I am thankful for the hardworking and brilliant doctors working on the Nevada Health Response Medical Advisory Team who support these measures. While not a silver bullet, these moves will help us get a better picture of the totality of this crisis. The more cases we can identify, the better we can treat them and save lives.

If history has taught us anything, it's that times such as these require real leadership. I might not be the best public speaker, and I'm certainly not as polished as the politicians we see in the movies, but here's what I can offer to my fellow Nevadans as we deal with this crisis:

I will be honest with you. I'll tell you the facts and deliver the good and bad news -- because I think you can handle it and deserve it.

That the people of this great state will remain my north star as we navigate this uncharted territory and face painstakingly difficult decisions

And that your life -- and the lives of your family members and neighbors -- will always be more valuable to me than the perceived and mistaken economic gain we'd have by cutting this isolation period short, or by waiting "one more day" to get serious. Waiting one more day to begin taking serious action to mitigate this virus is one more day of Nevadans getting sick and dying. And if someone is telling you otherwise, they are either mistaken, or recklessly incorrect.

And while I'm so proud of all those who've put their state before themselves and committed to stay home for Nevada, we know that not everyone is stepping up. And for those of you who've reached out, frustrated that certain businesses or leaders are endangering your families with their reckless decisions, I agree. And as our cases increase and our situation becomes more dire by the hour, I will continue to face the challenge head on with more drastic measures than I had previously anticipated in order to protect ALL Nevadans. I'll meet this moment. And as I'll explain in a moment, I'll do it by being aggressive and making the tough choices.

But first, let me start by laying out our situation in the most honest way possible: The virus is going to get worse before it gets better. Like so many other states, Nevada's health system will not be able to handle an excessive increase in patients all at once without rapidly straining resources. And without aggressive mitigation efforts, an outbreak can turn into a full blown crisis that will overwhelm our hospitals, put our health care workers at a higher risk of exposure, and test the limits of our medical system.

Statewide, we have fewer than 5,000 acute care beds. Of those 5,000 beds, fewer than 700 are intensive care unit beds that are better equipped to handle the severe cases of COVID-19. Right now, more than 80 percent of all those beds are occupied with a mix of COVID-19 and other patients. That means, we have only 20 percent of beds available. We have similar limits when it comes to ventilators.

Let me be clear, if we do not do everything we can to slow this virus, hospital beds will soon be completely filled with COVID-19 patients. There will be no beds to set broken bones, treat heart attacks or use for other necessary medical procedures.

This will ultimately put Nevada doctors in the same position doctors in Italy are in right now --. Being forced to decide between treating a father or a son, a mother or a daughter, a cousin or a nephew.

Don't put our doctors in that position. Don't put your family through that heartache.

Here's how we avoid that. We do what I've said up here repeatedly now. If home means Nevada, we stay home for Nevada. As governor, I've declared a state of emergency. I've shuttered schools. I urged the closure of non-essential businesses. I shut down gaming. The last time gaming was shut down in the state of Nevada was when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. That was for one day.

These were the hardest decisions to make. I know that gaming and hospitality is the lifeblood of our state. I see and I feel the damage this is causing. I drive down the same streets you do. Not only are the casinos dark, but the mom and pop shops, diners and salons are too.

I know the disruption it causes to cancel schools. Our schools are a safe haven for students and it's not easy to take that away from our children. Physically, schools are closed, but educators and other school personnel are absolutely essential. Whether they are home at work sharing lesson plans digitally, whether they are moving mountains to continue food services, whether they are cleaning and sanitizing our schools in preparation for when we return to our normal days. Thank you for this work. It's not easy and ideal, but this is how we must deliver for our state right now.

I know what that means and I know what this will mean for the future of Nevada. But I also know that if we don't take another step, we will lose many more Nevadans. And we can't afford that in this state. We can't. I won't let my inaction make this crisis worse. I won't look back in the months ahead and say, "I wish I did more sooner."

So today, I am taking that next step.

Previously, I asked non-essential businesses to close their doors to the public. I am no longer asking them to do that. I am directing all non-essential businesses to close. I repeat. If you are NOT an essential business, I am using my power as Governor under an emergency declaration to order you to close. I am signing a new emergency directive, the third I've signed since declaring a state of emergency.

The emergency directive has specific regulations and will be available to all immediately after these remarks end. There should be no confusion, and there is none in my mind. This is not the time to try to find loopholes -- if your business is not essential to providing sustenance and for the everyday safety, health, and wellbeing of Nevadans, you must shut down so that we can give healthcare workers and our fellow citizens the best chance at fighting this virus that we can.

By signing this directive I am granting local governments the authority they do not currently have to impose civil penalties -- including fining and revoking licenses -- of businesses that do not shut down. If businesses defy this directive and stay open, state AND local law enforcement will have the ability to treat this as a criminal act after all other options have been exhausted. This directive goes into effect at midnight tonight and will remain in place until April 16th.

I hoped it would not come to this. I did not want it to come to this. But to protect all Nevadans, this is necessary.

This is our only chance at "flattening the curve." That's a fancy way of saying that we need to move quickly and creatively to slow the tsunami that is headed our way. We need to put up strong barriers to ensure the waters don't overtake us. We have to slow down the flow so that our health care system can manage this challenge in the short-term.

Some are saying these actions will devastate our economy, but for a state that relies this heavily on visitors, the impacts are inevitable. It's happening whether we want it to or not. So our choice really comes down to how long we want this to drag on -- is it better to let it linger and hope it resolves itself while our economy continues to worsen and Nevadans get sick and die? No. That's not what we do. We will choose to face the facts, listen to the medical experts, ignore the misguided leaders, rip off the bandaid and hopefully cut this thing short, knowing that our chances of economic recovery are better if we make this painful decision today. Understanding that the faster we act, the sooner this ends, and the sooner we can all get back to business.

Mitigation is the only proven way to lessen the blow and get on the path to recovery.

And I've already got a lot of smart Nevadans working on that now. In fact, Nevada was one of the first states to get statewide approval for small business administration disaster loans. That's due to the hard work of the Division of Emergency Management and the Governor's Office of Economic Development. This means small businesses that have suffered substantial economic injury as a result of COVID-19 can apply for low interest federal loans.

I also waived two requirements for Nevadans who are out of work to apply for unemployment insurance benefits while they get back on their feet. During this crisis, Nevadans won't have to prove they are searching for work and won't have to wait seven days after being approved to receive their benefits.

Additionally, the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange has opened a special enrollment period for Nevadans to gain access to health insurance. If you need health insurance, do not wait.

I want to be clear. Nevada is working on economic recovery, but my primary focus right now is preventing the spread of this virus.

I am your governor, and I want the best for each and every one of you. I have worked tirelessly and I will continue to work tirelessly for you, I can guarantee that. But we can only do this together. Stay home for Nevada, and close your doors for now, so we can get them open for business sooner.

It feels like the world has turned topsy turvy. But if, and only if, Nevadans come together and put each other first, we can turn the world right side up again. If home means Nevada to you, stay home for Nevada.

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