



**NEVADA  
HEALTH  
RESPONSE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Sisolak activates national guard, signs directive to bring relief to healthcare professionals**

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak was joined by Major General Ondra L. Berry to announce measures the state has taken during the COVID-19 virus, including the activation of the Nevada National Guard.

Major General Berry will oversee the organization of the State's response efforts in conjunction with the Department of Emergency Management and the Department of Health and Human Services. As this global pandemic continues to impact our state, this activation means that Nevada will have the best of the best running our statewide response operation.

The Governor also announced that he signed the Battle Born Medical Corps emergency directive today, which is aimed at expanding our healthcare workforce to fight COVID-19. This Directive will waive certain licensing requirements to allow Nevada to quickly bring additional health care workers into our hospitals, and allow certain doctors, nurses, EMTs, and even medical students to go to work right now caring for COVID-19 patients.

The Governor also announced that \$6.25 million in state funding was approved at a Board of Examiners meeting today. The authorization is pending approval from the Interim Finance Committee. These funds will grant Nevada access to FEMA monies, and will be directed to, among other items crucial to the response, the purchase of critical PPE.

The Governor's prepared remarks were as follows:

*Good afternoon.*

*Thank you for being here. And to all the Nevadans who are staying home, thank you. With your help, we will flatten this curve and help end this crisis. Today, I wanted to take some time to update all Nevadans about where we stand in the fight against COVID-19.*

*As of this afternoon, more than 1,200 of our Nevadans have tested positive for this virus and 32 of them have lost their lives to this deadly disease. Those are our mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and friends. I know there are many families across Nevada who are grieving. Kathy and I are grieving, too.*

*We know that testing more Nevadans is a critical step in battling this invisible enemy. Having additional testing will let us identify areas to focus our stretched medical resources. Unfortunately, access to testing is a problem plaguing our entire nation, not just our State.*

*However, due to the innovation and hard work of Nevadans like Dr. Mark Pandori, the Director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory, we are taking some of this into our hands. Dr. Pandori aggressively pursued new FDA approvals to expand lab testing capabilities for Nevada, and is also using FEMA materials to build test collection kits for Nevada.*

*This is the kind of smart, innovative leadership needed during this crisis, and every Nevadan should join me in being immensely grateful and proud of Dr. Pandori and his team.*

*We also know that personal protective equipment, or PPE, is critical as we fight this virus on the front lines and in our communities. And we know where the greatest needs is: for our medical professionals as they provide life-saving care.*

*But PPE is also desperately needed for our first responders, employees in essential businesses, restaurant delivery drivers, grocery store clerks, child care workers, and the list goes on.*

*I want to be clear: I think every Nevadan who needs a test should have access to a test. I strongly believe every Nevadan who is waking up every day to continue keeping our state running while others stay home deserve to have the PPE that will keep them safe.*

*If I could make that happen today, I would. I know anyone would.*

*But I'm not here to point fingers today, because it doesn't get us anywhere. Instead, I can assure you of this: I am doing everything in my power to get us more of everything. Whether it's calling the federal government, organizing the private sector to donate what they can, and more.*

*That's why today, I held an emergency Board of Examiners meeting. We approved \$6.25 million in state funding – pending IFC approval – to help pay for the cost of battling COVID-19, including the purchase of PPE that is in critical need right now. This funding will also help us leverage \$5 million in federal FEMA dollars right away.*

*In Nevada, we are leveraging local, federal and private industry connections to deal with this unprecedented situation. We will continue to update you all as we acquire and distribute more tests kits and PPE.*

*As we battle this virus, we know there are more Nevadans who will need medical care, and I'm constantly monitoring reports from the Nevada Hospital Association. Here's what we know as of today:*

*Between 6 and 20 percent of Nevada's COVID-19 patients are requiring hospitalization. Of these cases, 74 percent are admitted to the ICU and 44 percent require a ventilator.*

*From the beginning, I've been up front about my goal: mitigate the spread to save lives and protect our health care system from being overwhelmed, which could lead to disastrous results.*

*While there's a lot being worked on right now at the state and local levels to expand our healthcare system with additional capacity, I'm excited to announce today that we can check off one of those boxes.*

*Today I signed a Directive aimed at expanding our healthcare workforce to fight COVID-19. This Directive will waive certain licensing requirements to allow us to quickly bring additional health care workers into our hospitals where we so desperately need them right now.*

*This Directive will allow certain doctors, nurses, EMTs, and even medical students to go to work right now caring for COVID-19 patients.*

*It will allow people who have retired to come back into practice without leaping over hurdles.*

*It will allow professionals from other states to come here to help. It allows people with medical training from other countries to work alongside us as we fight this disease.*

*And it will make sure we can do this without all the red tape that usually slows down these processes.*

*Today, I call on all Nevadans who possess these critical skills to join what I am calling our **BATTLE BORN MEDICAL CORPS**. Our state was born in in the midst of one of our country's darkest moments, and we rose from those depths to greatness. Fighting for our state is in our very DNA – it's who we are as Nevadans. This is our moment to once again show the world what it means to be Battle Born.*

*In addition to the Battle Born Medical Corps Directive signed today, I also formally issued a "Stay at Home" directive and extended the deadline on all other directives under the State of Emergency Declaration, including school closures, gaming closures, and closures of non-essential businesses, to April 30<sup>th</sup>.*

*This Stay at Home directive merely reinforces and strengthens the imperative that we began communicating on March 17<sup>th</sup> that Nevadans must not leave their homes for non-essential activities.*

*We have taken a number of critical and unprecedented steps since the Emergency Declaration as part of our hashtag Stay Home For Nevada effort to help flatten the curve. From closing schools, to nonessential businesses, and casinos, to limiting gatherings to less than 10 people.*

*All of these steps were done early and swiftly precisely because my team of medical experts informed me that these were some of the most effective ways to decrease mobility, increase social distancing, and flatten the curve to ensure fewer people got sick and our medical system would not be overwhelmed.*

*In the interest of making our intent more clear, this directive builds on those efforts and ensures everyone fully understands our statewide goal: STAY HOME for our*

*State.*

*As before, this order still allows essential functions like grocery shopping, going to the doctor's office, and driving to an essential business. It also allows outdoor activity like walking, jogging, biking, and hiking. But you must continue adhering to the other emergency directives and protocols like limiting groups to less than 10 and keeping a minimum of 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.*

*Additionally, yesterday I issued a travel advisory urging Nevadans and visitors to self-quarantine and monitor their health for 14 days after arriving in or returning to Nevada as part of our overall strategy in slowing and containing the spread of COVID-19.*

*We know this virus does not spread on its own so we need everyone, Nevadans and travelers, to take preventive measures to help flatten the curve and protect the most vulnerable among us.*

*I also want to strongly urge Nevadans to avoid non-essential travel during this time period, especially to places where the CDC has issued travel advisories. For Nevada residents who live in communities that border other states, please practice aggressive social distancing if you must cross state lines for essential daily matters.*

*I'd now like to discuss a recent change in our emergency operation structure in our statewide response to COVID-19. Earlier this week, I announced that the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services would be temporarily aligned with the Nevada Office of the Military for the duration of the COVID-19 public health crisis.*

*The Office of the Military is led by Nevada's Adjutant General Ondra Berry, who was pinned major general just this morning. It was an absolute honor getting to watch General Berry's two daughters pin the 2<sup>nd</sup> star on their father during an intimate ceremony.*

*This new structure, with General Berry at the helm, ensures that our already-robust COVID-19 response effort, with DEM and DHHS remaining key partners, will be even more organized, responsive, and efficient than ever before.*

*And in order to solidify this new statewide emergency operation structure and maximize the benefits that the Nevada National Guard can bring to our state during*

*this unprecedented crisis, today I am announcing that I am using my authority as Governor to activate the Nevada National Guard.*

*By activating today, Nevada will be able to pursue federal funding to the Nevada National Guard's mission in this COVID-19 crisis. But most importantly, as this global pandemic continues to impact our state, this activation means that Nevada has the best of the best running our statewide response operation – and you and your families deserve nothing less.*

*We are living in unprecedented times, and Nevada is joining many other states across our great nation in utilizing the National Guard to help manage this crisis. From delivering critical medical equipment and supplies to providing a labor force and planning the massive logistical operations needed to get resources from point A to point B, no one is better.*

*The Guard trains year-round, both domestically and abroad, for crises in every scenario imaginable. They are committed to protecting the health and safety of our citizens, and they are ready to join the fight.*

*I'd now like to turn it over to General Berry so he could speak as to what activation means in bolstering our COVID-19 response efforts.*

### **Major General Ondra Berry Spoke**

*Thank you, General Berry.*

*Before we move on, I just wanted to share a few more words about why I'm so proud to have the Nevada National Guard at our side during this fight.*

*The Nevada National Guard is made up of the very people we are trying to protect. They are our sons, daughters, and parents. They are doctors and teachers. They stock store and warehouse shelves and manufacture products.*

*They are neighbors, helping neighbors. That's why I trust them, and it's why I know Nevadans will trust them, too.*

*They are also the foremost experts on logistics and managing crises. When the Guard gets called in, you know you're dealing with the best of the best, and our children, parents, and grandparents deserve nothing less.*

*Although these are indeed difficult times, I want everyone to know that the State has banded together in so many different areas. As of yesterday nearly 500,000 meals have been served by the school districts. It doesn't stop with the school districts, though.*

*The Emergency Food Assistance Program has been helping out, too. Between the Food Bank of Northern Nevada and Three Square in southern Nevada nearly 2 million have been provided to over 140,000 eligible individuals. These meals are being donated directly to our citizens most in need.*

*These numbers are large, but still don't even come close to reflecting the donations from grocery stores, casinos, and other private donors who are also contributing and astonishing me with their generosity. I encourage you all to keep up the excellent work ensuring that all Nevadans stay fed.*

*Lyon County Human Services recruited staff who are working from home to assist with meal distribution and deliveries to those in need.*

*The kindness in food donations is just one example, though. The list goes on. Our schools and teachers are diligently working around the clock to ensure students are still able to learn and prosper during this quarantine.*

*Companies all across the State are donating excess PPE to hospitals, while individuals and church groups throughout the State that are Staying Home for Nevada are personally making masks to donate to doctor's offices, and special needs and senior centers.*

*As you all know, dining in at restaurants right now is not an option, but Nevadans are still supporting their local restaurants by ordering delivery and curbside.*

*Grocery stores are not only offering early hours to seniors to shop, but their teams are working nonstop to make sure the stores are clean and stocked with essential items.*

*Convenience stores and gas stations workers are still diligently working to also provide essential services.*

*Whenever I hear this positive news, it always reemphasizes my love for this State, and faith in all Nevadans who have proven time and time again that whenever things get tough, we will always unite, take care of each other, and get through it together.*

*And now I will take some questions.*

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