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BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Doug Burgum announced today he will lift North Dakota's COVID-19 emergency declaration on April 30 as the state continues to shift the focus of its pandemic response efforts to increasing vaccination rates.

Burgum declared a state of emergency in response to COVID-19 on March 13, 2020, the same day then-President Donald Trump declared a national emergency and two days after North Dakota had confirmed its first case of COVID-19.

"Lifting this emergency declaration on April 30 recognizes the tremendous progress our state has made in protecting the most vulnerable, preserving hospital capacity and making safe, effective vaccines available to every eligible North Dakotan," Burgum said. "Nearly 70% of North Dakotans ages 65 years and older have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 64% are fully vaccinated, including over 90% of long-term care residents. Our vaccination efforts remain a top priority as another wave of COVID-19 continues to spread across the country and world."

The State of North Dakota currently has no enforced business or event protocols related to COVID-19, though local measures or orders may still be in place. A statewide mask requirement, implemented by the state health officer with Burgum's support on Nov. 18 as hospitals and health care workers were overwhelmed with patients and COVID-related deaths were peaking, was lifted Jan. 18, making its 65-day duration the shortest among states that implemented such requirements.

"North Dakota has relied heavily on individual responsibility and local control throughout our pandemic fight. Mitigation measures were deployed strategically and kept in place long enough for vaccines to be made available to every eligible citizen," Burgum said. "Our vaccination efforts will continue stronger than ever, and we encourage those who haven't received the vaccine to consider getting it to protect themselves and their communities."

Over 510,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in North Dakota, which has an estimated population of 762,000. More than 62% of North Dakotans ages 50 years or older have received at least one dose, and over 54% are fully vaccinated.

"While the emergency declaration is ending, the virus is still present in our communities," Interim State Health Officer Dirk Wilke said. "We encourage North Dakotans to keep using the tools that got us here: physical distancing, wearing a mask when you can't distance, getting tested and vaccinated."

Lifting the emergency declaration on April 30 will eliminate the remaining pandemic-related executive orders. The Unified Command will be decommissioned effective April 30, however National Guard resources will continue to be available to support the Department of Health and local public health vaccination and testing efforts.

Waiting until April 30 to lift the declaration will allow the Legislature to pass pending legislation tied to pandemic-related executive orders that cut red tape and ensured assistance reached citizens, and will allow an orderly decommission of the Unified Command.

For more information on North Dakota's COVID-19 response, visit www.health.nd.gov/coronavirus or www.ndresponse.gov.

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