

Public health disaster emergency declaration to end April 15

Tuesday March 8, 2022

Boise, Idaho – After weeks of thoughtful deliberation with numerous stakeholders, Governor Brad Little announced today Idaho will end the public health emergency on April 15, 2022.

Governor Little's statement on reaching the milestone follows:

"I kept Idaho open, banned vaccine passports, never issued mandates for vaccines or masks, and successfully challenged Biden's overreaching vaccine mandates in court.

"The emergency declaration served as an administrative function to recoup FEMA dollars for a variety of needs throughout Idaho. The emergency declaration never violated or restricted any rights of Idahoans, never put Idaho on lockdown, and never allowed for mandates for masks or vaccines. These are the facts.

"Without the emergency declaration we would not be able to provide historic tax relief, a step that's even more important now as gas prices and inflation soar. Without the emergency declaration, Idaho would not be the state with the strongest economy in the nation.

"We're hopeful the recent decrease in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths means we are on a downward trend with the pandemic. For weeks, we have been closely examining the needs within Idaho's healthcare system with an eye toward ending the public health emergency declaration as soon as possible. The April 15 timeframe provides an important bridge for hospitals and other healthcare providers to plan for the transition.

"I want to thank Idahoans, especially our medical community, first responders, public health officials, and National Guard volunteers for helping us reach this positive milestone."

The activation of a statewide public health emergency since the start of the pandemic has enabled the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to cover costs associated with distribution of critical supplies such as ventilators and PPE, medical staffing, National Guard support, vaccine distribution, and other needs.

Every single state had a public health emergency declaration in place, and dozens still do. FEMA covered \$257 million in costs since March of 2020 that would otherwise have been covered by the Idaho state budget or local governments. That means without the emergency declaration, the State of Idaho would not be able to provide Idahoans with historic tax relief and unprecedented strategic investments to keep up with growth.

Only the Governor can lawfully end an emergency declaration. For weeks, the Governor's Office has been coordinating with stakeholders to minimize impacts and ensure hospitals and others are prepared for the expiration of the emergency declaration on April 15.

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been much misinformation about what the emergency declaration does and does not do. The emergency declaration:

- Existed as an administrative document to ensure FEMA can cover costs associated with pandemic needs, so the Idaho state budget and local governments are not on the hook for costs
- Enabled Idaho to cut red tape to allow more nurses to enter the workforce and expand telehealth services

- Enabled the activation of the National Guard to expand healthcare capacity
- Added hundreds of medical personnel to support long-term care facilities and hospitals overrun with patients
- Covered costs for first responders; county emergency management; funeral assistance; testing; vaccine rollout; PPE, ventilators, and other medical equipment, bringing much needed resources to Idaho
- DOES NOT violate or restrict any rights of Idahoans
- DOES NOT put Idaho on lockdown
- DOES NOT put in place mandates for masks or vaccines

Governor Little kept Idaho open, never put in place mask or vaccine mandates, banned vaccine passports, and successfully challenged President Biden's vaccine mandates in court. Idaho now has the strongest economy in the nation.

Idaho still maintains a fund to respond to COVID-19 if needs change.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare will continue to serve as a resource for COVID-19 information and will continue to update Coronavirus.Idaho.Gov.

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