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6:30PM CT on March 30, 2020

Being the Best-Prepared State for COVID-19 (https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/being-best-prepared-state-covid-19)

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Media Release:

Gov. Ricketts Extends Statewide Social Distancing Restrictions Until April 30th & Details New Unemployment Programs

Gov. Ricketts (podium), NDOL Commissioner John Albin (right of Gov.),

and R.J. Vega of Copal restaurant (far left) at today's briefing.

Watch the video by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fiwsn6zso8lkh10h%2FPress%2520Conf%25203.30.2020.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov

LINCOLN – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts held a press conference to announce that the State of Nebraska has extended statewide social distancing restrictions through April 30th. Earlier in March, the State of Nebraska issued social distancing restrictions for the entire state. The previously announced restrictions, which have now been extended, can be found by clicking here (http://dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/COVID-19-Events-Public-Gatherings-Schools%20Guidance.pdf).

In addition to these social distancing restrictions, 30 counties are currently covered by a Directed Health Measure which can be found by clicking here. (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fbsro5om6vs0rmtz%2FDHM%25203.30.2020.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov%7C739078

At the news conference, Gov. Ricketts detailed new unemployment programs being implemented in Nebraska as a result of federal legislation to aid the pandemic response. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020.

The Governor explained that the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) is undertaking software changes and making other preparations to roll out the unemployment programs outlined in the CARES Act. Nebraska's Labor Commissioner, John Albin, is working directly with the U.S. Department of Labor to expedite implementation of the unemployment programs. At today's press briefing, Commissioner Albin joined the Governor to overview the unemployment programs contained in the CARES Act and to report on the State's preparations to administer them.

Those programs include:

- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) – Allows unemployment benefits to individuals who have exhausted all other unemployment benefits, and those not eligible for other unemployment benefits, including workers who are self-employed and independent contractors. The minimum PUA weekly payment will be $174 and top out at $440.
- Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) – This emergency increase in Unemployment Insurance Benefits adds $600 per week in federal benefits to the unemployment benefit amount for COVID-19 unemployment claims, including PUA claims.
- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) – Allows 13 weeks of federally funded benefits to be added to the end of the normal 26 weeks of benefits.
- Short Time Compensation Programs (also known as Work Share) – Provides federal funding of Short-Time Compensation, a program that allows businesses to uniformly reduce their teammates' hours while the workers receive a partial unemployment benefit.

At today's press event, Governor Ricketts also signed a proclamation to designate every Tuesday from March 31st through the end of April 2020 as "Takeout Tuesday." The purpose of the proclamation is to encourage Nebraskans to support their local dining establishments as these restaurants continue to serve customers during the pandemic.

R.J. Vega, with Copal restaurant in Lincoln, thanked the Governor for the proclamation during the press conference. Vega described the challenges restaurants have faced due to the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency. Servers, bartenders, and hourly staff have had their lives profoundly impacted. Restaurants have struggled to make payroll and keep the lights on. Vega also spoke of Copal's innovative work to overcome these challenges by transitioning its business model from dine-in to carry-out and delivery.

Gov. Ricketts also reiterated the State's social distancing measures at the press conference.

- Some Local Health Departments (LHD) in Lincoln and metro Omaha have issued additional restrictions on social gatherings and/or businesses. Check with your LHD for additional information.
- The 10-person limitation applies to outdoor gatherings like picnics or outdoor activities like sand volleyball.
- Travelers coming back to Nebraska from out of state should self-quarantine for 14 days. This includes snowbirds returning to Nebraska after having spent the winter in places like Arizona, Florida, or Texas. However, the guidance to self-quarantine does not apply to commuters or workers in the transportation industry.

Full video of today's press briefing is available by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fiwsn6zso8lkh10h%2FPress%2520Conf%25203.30.2020.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov

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