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TWELVE MONTHS LATER: DESPITE PANDEMIC MISSOURI MOVED FORWARD

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MARCH 8, 2021

JEFFERSON CITY — Since the first presumptive positive COVID-19 case was detected in Missouri one year ago, Governor Mike Parson and his administration have worked continuously to combat the virus, keep Missourians safe, and move Missouri's economy forward.

"Since COVID-19 struck Missouri one year ago, we have worked nonstop to take a balanced approach, fight the virus, and keep Missourians as safe as possible," Governor Parson said. "A tremendous amount of work has been accomplished over the past 12 months, and I could not be more proud of Missourians for their efforts."

The Governor's Office was initially briefed on the COVID-19 pandemic by Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) Director Dr. Randall Williams on January 28, 2020, and immediately began taking steps to prepare.

When Missouri's first positive case was identified on March 7, Governor Parson immediately traveled to St. Louis for the announcement. Since that time, Governor Parson's administration, Missouri's 16 executive agencies, and numerous stakeholders from across the state have worked together to respond, rebuild, and recover.

Since March, the state has taken numerous actions to respond and adapt to COVID-19:

- Pulled together the entire Cabinet and every state agency to coordinate statewide response efforts
- Convened weekly calls for over 10 straight months with community leaders and medical experts
- Waived nearly 600 statutes and regulations to provide more flexibility and safety for Missourians
- Significantly expanded COVID-19 testing to over 100,000 a week
- Mobilized the Missouri National Guard to assist with response efforts
- Constructed an alternate care site in 11 days to assist hospitals in the St. Louis region
- Launched the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan to support Missouri citizens, businesses, and communities
- Distributed $520 million in CARES Act funds to local jurisdictions within 10 days

- Helped secure over $11 billion in low-interest loans for Missouri small businesses through the SBA
- Delivered Remdesivir to hospitals across the state and brought in additional health care staff to further expand hospital capacity
- Partnered with Google to launch the PPE Marketplace
- Shipped over 315,000 cases of PPE to frontline health care providers, including 24 million gowns, 20 million gloves, 8.5 million surgical masks, 5.7 million N95 masks, and 1.6 million face shields
- One of the first states in the nation to submit a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine plan to the CDC

In recent weeks, Missouri has seen significant declines in virus activity across the state. Missouri is currently second lowest in the nation for average daily cases, and the state's seven-day positivity rate has fallen to 4.5 percent – down from a high of 24 percent in November 2020.

Hospitalizations also continue to decline, falling below 1,000 last week for the first time since September 2020. On February 28, Missouri hospitals reported 989 hospitalized patients, a 64 percent decrease since the first week of January.

Missouri's economy also continues to show strong signs of recovery. The state has now recovered 70 percent of jobs lost to COVID-19, putting Missouri among the top tier of states for total economic recovery.

Due to the financial impact of COVID-19, the state previously restricted approximately $438 million in FY 2021 spending to ensure a balanced budget and the necessary funds to combat the virus moving forward. At the time these budget decisions were made, Missouri's unemployment rate was projected to be at roughly 16.3 percent.

As of December 2020, Missouri's unemployment rate was 5.8 percent – less than half of what was originally projected. Additionally, the state's monthly general revenue report showed that net general revenue collections for February 2021 increased 8.1 percent compared to February 2020.

Missouri's stronger than projected financial position has allowed the state to release all FY 2021 general revenue restrictions. Governor Parson's administration has continued to practice fiscal discipline throughout the pandemic and has maintained the state's AAA credit rating.

Even in the midst of a pandemic, the state continued to prioritize major infrastructure projects. In a little more than one year since its passage, 40 percent of projects included in Governor Parson's Focus on Bridges program to repair or replace 250 bridges have been completed.

Missouri was also one of two states to receive the 2020 Full Employment Award by the American Institute for Full Employment, recognizing the state's efforts in getting people back to work by coordinating unemployment and workforce programs.

Throughout the pandemic, the need for expanded broadband services for individuals, businesses, and schools has only grown. Combined, more than $545 million in state and federal funds have been invested to connect approximately 235,000 Missouri households.

Governor Parson and his administration remain committed to safely returning students to the classroom. Currently, over 95 percent of Missouri school districts are offering a form of in-person learning, and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) ranks Missouri among the top five states with the largest number of school districts holding fully in-person learning.

The state also continues to make progress with COVID-19 vaccine administration efforts. Missouri received national recognition on its COVID-19 vaccine plan, which was submitted to the CDC in October 2020. Missouri's plan was used as a framework by other states in developing their own plans.

"Our team worked diligently for months to ensure we were prepared to execute our vaccine plan, which has since led us to initiating vaccinations for over one million Missourians in less than three months with an extremely limited supply," Governor Parson said. "This has been an incredible collaborative effort, and I want to thank all of the agencies and partners involved for their hard work and dedication."

To provide Missourians with accurate information regarding the safety of the vaccines, research and production processes, and when they may be eligible for vaccination, the state launched MOStopsCOVID.com (https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/) in November 2020 before vaccines arrived in Missouri.

In February, the state launched the Missouri Vaccine Navigator, a secure registry tool to assist Missourians in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. The navigator helps streamline the vaccination process by notifying registrants upon activation of each phase, alerting them when they become eligible, and reminding them to return for their second dose if applicable.

To date, Missouri providers have administered more than 1.53 million total doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to Missourians across the state. Nearly 16.5 percent or more than one million Missourians have received an initial vaccine dose, and more than 530,000 Missourians have been fully vaccinated. More than 49 percent of all Missourians 65 and older have received an initial vaccination.

According to CDC data, which includes the latest doses administered through federal partnerships, Missouri has administered more than 1.6 million doses, and over 21 percent of Missouri's 18 and older population has received an initial vaccination.

As vaccine increases and more Missourians become eligible, Governor Parson recently announced that local pharmacies across Missouri will begin receiving prioritized shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine through a new state pharmacy program. Missouri also continues to partner with high throughput health centers, local health departments, hospitals, and other community providers to ensure equitable distribution among the state's nine regions.

To reach areas with limited access to health care, the state has partnered with local health care agencies to host mass vaccination events in each of Missouri's nine regions as well as targeted vaccination events in St. Louis and Kansas City. As of March 7, 108 mass vaccination and 55 targeted vaccination clinics have been completed with more than 130,000 total doses administered.

Missourians are encouraged to visit MOStopsCOVID.com (https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/) to view the latest vaccine updates, find out when they are eligible for the vaccine, and locate available vaccinators in their area.

"When COVID-19 struck, there was no roadmap on how to fight it. We have faced many challenges over the past year, but there is clear light at the end of this tunnel, and it's only getting brighter," Governor Parson said. "Thanks to our balanced approach and the efforts of millions of Missourians, we have made incredible progress in a short amount of time, and the data shows that we are winning the fight."

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