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Governor Gianforte Prioritizes Most Vulnerable With New COVID-19 Approach

Provides Clear Path to Rescind Statewide Mask Mandate

Governor's Office
January 06 2021

HELENA, Mont. – In his first press conference as governor, Greg Gianforte today announced how his administration will approach the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the afternoon press conference, Governor Gianforte indicated his priorities are protecting the most vulnerable, promoting incentives and personal responsibility over mandates, and making directives clear and easier to understand.

General Matt Quinn, who heads up the administration's COVID-19 response, joined Governor Gianforte at the press conference.

After describing the impact of COVID-19, Governor Gianforte reemphasized that confronting the virus is his "top priority as governor."

Governor Gianforte announced two key changes in COVID-19 policy.

First, Governor Gianforte is revising the COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan to prioritize getting the vaccine to the most vulnerable.

The revised vaccine distribution plan puts Montanans 70 years of age and older, Montanans 16 to 69 years of age that have an underlying severe medical condition, and Native Americans next in line for the vaccine, after frontline health care workers.

"We need to provide the vaccine to those that want it. We cannot have vaccines sitting on a shelf. That's why I have tasked DPHHS and General Quinn to begin the process of revising the vaccine distribution plan to prioritize the most vulnerable," Governor Gianforte said.

"I have directed the team to make this change effective immediately," Governor Gianforte continued.

Second, Governor Gianforte provided the path to rescinding the statewide mask mandate, including two conditions. Governor Gianforte said, "After we have increased vaccine distribution and after I have legislation on my desk that protects businesses, schools, places of worship, and nonprofit organizations that follow guidelines from lawsuits, then we will rescind the current statewide mask mandate."

Governor Gianforte emphasized the state needs to protect businesses and schools from lawsuits if they make a good faith effort to protect individuals from the spread of coronavirus and follow clear public health guidelines.

Governor Gianforte continued, "To combat the virus, I believe providing incentives and promoting personal responsibility are more effective than imposing impractical mandates."

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ABOUT MONTANA

Population: 1,005,141

Nickname: Treasure State

State Capital: Helena

State Flower: Bitterroot

State Bird: Western Meadowlark

State Animal: Grizzly Bear

State Fish: Blackspotted Cutthroat Trout

State Gemstones: Sapphire & Agate

State Motto: Oro y Plata (Gold and Silver)