Gov. Beshear Updates Kentuckians on New Hospital Funding, COVID-19 Cases, Vaccines

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Governor also vetoes unconstitutional bills that risk Kentucky lives during a pandemic

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 19, 2021) – On Tuesday, Gov. Andy Beshear updated Kentuckians on increased funding for Kentucky hospitals, COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 vaccines as well as bills he is vetoing because they are unconstitutional and a threat to Kentucky lives during this pandemic.

“I come to you today as our country passes a grim milestone of losing 400,000 Americans to the coronavirus. That is a staggering loss. It’s so large it’s hard to actually see it in your mind, to process how big it is,” said Gov. Beshear. “You could fill up both UK and UofL stadiums three-and-a-quarter times and that would represent the number of lives, the number of people that we have lost in America.”

The Governor said 332,450 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been received in Kentucky and 221,440 doses have been administered. Of the doses administered, 36,970 have been given to long-term care facility residents and staff.

More than 83,000 doses were administered from Jan. 10 to 16, about 16,000 more than were administered the week prior. Of the doses administered, 209,736 were first doses and 11,704 were booster doses.

The Governor said Kentucky is now administering the vaccine faster than the federal government is sending it new doses. The state expects to receive 56,175 new doses next week. Kentucky has been recognized (https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/15/health/states-vaccinating-faster-west-virginia/index.html) as one of only nine states that have administered more than half of the doses they've received.

“Right now we can’t guarantee that every pharmacy across Kentucky gets vaccine, because we don’t have enough supply. That’s why today I formally requested from Operation Warp Speed that the federal government double the amount of vaccine we receive every week,” said Gov. Beshear. “We are proving we can get it out there. We are

proving that we are efficient. We are proving that we can get it into people's arms."

"I am confident that in Kentucky if we had unlimited vaccine, we could easily immunize 200,000 to 250,000 people a week, if not more today, if we had enough vaccine," said Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health. "We get about 54,000 doses per week approximately, and that's all we can do."

The Governor also announced Kentucky hospitals will receive an additional $800 million to $1 billion annually to help advance the quality of care of Medicaid members and provide a stable base for hospitals that will extend beyond the financial challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Secretary Eric Friedlander said, "This is an opportunity for Kentucky to really take a step forward in coverage for our fellow Kentuckians, for improving the quality of care and for paying hospitals what we should."

Kentucky Hospital Association President and CEO Nancy Galvagni, said: "Our hospitals are proud to offer high-quality care close to home. And this program that CMS approved will help them continue to meet that goal. This enhanced funding will be crucial to our hospitals for upgrading equipment, for retaining their employees and covering the cost of providing quality care for their communities."

To learn more, see the full release (https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=560).

Case Information
As of 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19, Gov. Beshear reported the following COVID-19 numbers:

New cases today: 2,250
New deaths today: 27
Positivity rate: 11.55%
Total deaths: 3,194
Currently hospitalized: 1,633
Currently in ICU: 442
Currently on ventilator: 208

Top counties with the most positive cases today are: Jefferson, Campbell, Warren, Fayette and Kenton. Each of these counties reported 80 or more new cases.

To see a list of those reported lost to the virus today, click here. (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210119%20New%20Deaths.pdf)

Memorial
"Today we are sharing the story of Josephine Hollkamp of Louisville, who passed away on Jan. 5 from COVID-19. Her granddaughter Shannon reached out to us, sharing how her grandmother was a fighter, but unfortunately she did not survive the virus, passing away at 97.

"Shannon told stories of how her grandmother cared for her daily after school, and how she was always amazed by the love between her grandmother and her grandfather. Even in the little mundane parts of their day, love was always there. They were married for 53 years, and the family finds comfort knowing they are now reunited.

"Josephine lived a long and amazing life, full of travel, quilting and cooking. She always gave to others, volunteering her time with both her church and with Little Sisters of the Poor for 25 years. But more than anything, she loved being with her family. Josephine had nine children, more than 20 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. She

always made sure to say ‘I love you’ every day, and the family never left without a hug or a kiss.

“Shannon and their family ask us to mask up, if not for ourselves, for those around us. In honor of Josephine, let’s spread love by doing our part to keep those like her safe.”

Gov. Beshear Vetoes Unconstitutional Bills That Would Put Kentucky Lives at Risk
Today, Gov. Beshear vetoed (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210119_Veto-Messages.pdf) five bills, including House Bill 1 (https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/21rs/hb1.html) and Senate Bill 1 (https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/21rs/sb1.html), allowing him to continue taking bold, effective actions to save lives, and ensuring future governors have the tools they need to address new emergencies quickly.

The Governor said his efforts to stop COVID-19 are widely supported by Kentuckians (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/01.19Supportouractions.png): 86% (https://kateto.net/covid19/COVID19%20CONSORTIUM%20REPORT%2032%20MEASURES%20Jan%202021.pdf) support asking people to stay at home and avoid gathering in groups; 78% (https://kateto.net/covid19/COVID19%20CONSORTIUM%20REPORT%2032%20MEASURES%20Jan%202021.pdf) support limiting restaurants to carry-out only; and 73% (https://kateto.net/covid19/COVID19%20CONSORTIUM%20REPORT%2032%20MEASURES%20Jan%202021.pdf) support prohibiting K-12 schools from teaching in-person.

“What this says is no matter what party you’re in, no matter who you voted for for president, the people of Kentucky support the ability to take steps necessary to protect us,” said Gov. Beshear.

Normalized by population, Kentucky has a lower number of deaths (https://governor-edit.ky.gov/ImageLinks/01.19%20Deaths%20by%20states%2C%20https___91-divoc.com_.png) than all neighboring states. The state has crushed or plateaued three different surges in cases. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consistently has backed (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210111_CDC-Guidance_HB1.pdf) the effectiveness of Gov. Beshear’s restrictions aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 in restaurants and bars, gyms, schools and other venues.

Gov. Beshear also reminded Kentuckians that even the director of the CDC, Dr. Robert Redfield, advised against any bill that writes public health guidance into law.

“I want to make it clear that CDC guidance should not be interpreted as regulation; rather, they are meant as recommendations. It should be used in consideration for specific state and/or local regulations, but this guidance is meant to be flexible and adaptable,” Dr. Redfield said. “It is not meant to be prescriptive or interpreted as standards that can be regulated.”

These bills are unconstitutional: the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/01.19SupremeCourt.png) “our examination of the Kentucky Constitution causes us to conclude the emergency powers the Governor has exercised are executive in nature, never raising a separation of powers issue in the first instance.”

“This is a way of saying under the Kentucky Constitution, this is the executive branch’s job,” said Gov. Beshear. “I certainly hope we wouldn’t think that in the middle of a battle, in the middle of a war, you would have a legislative branch debate and vote on tactics – that’s just not how the Constitution is set up.”

The Governor said Senate Bill 1 (https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/21rs/sb1.html) interferes with the Governor’s power and constitutional responsibility to confront emergencies; allows the General Assembly to exercise power outside of session and forces the Governor to call it back into session in the event of an emergency; and, the bill

provides an inferior executive officer, the Attorney General, the power to approve or disapprove of the Governor's decisions.

The Governor also said Senate Bill 1 (https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/21rs/sb1.html) would also be costly (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/01.19SpecialSessionCost.png) for taxpayers. If the General Assembly approved the Governor's emergency action in 30-day increments, with no Saturday meeting days and five days to pass a bill or resolution through both chambers, special sessions would cost $65,000 per day. That would be $325,000 per five-day session and $3.25 million for 10 sessions.

The Governor emphasized that House Bill 5 (https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/21rs/hb5.html) is unconstitutional as well, because it would: "…*prevent [the Governor] from executing new laws passed by the General Assembly or the United States Congress that require new or different governmental structures to carry out. It would also disqualify the Commonwealth from federal grants that may require a new office or commission."*

The Governor said moving forward he would be working with lawmakers on a resolution to the legislation.

More Information
To view the full daily report (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/COVID19DailyReport.pdf), incidence rate map (https://chfs.ky.gov/Pages/cv19maps.aspx), information on testing locations (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid-testing), vaccines (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid-vaccine), contact tracing (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-contact-tracing), school reports and guidance (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-school), guidance for health care providers (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthcare-guidance) and the White House Coronavirus Task Force reports for Kentucky and more, visit kycovid19.ky.gov (https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19).

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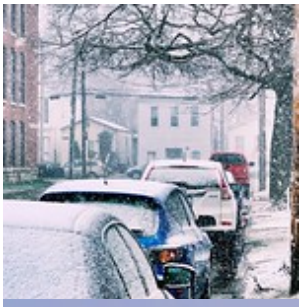
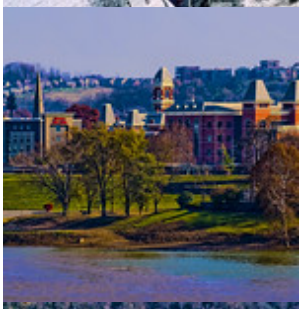
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/7372926@N06/47218320672/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/47184596121/in/pool-773339@N20)
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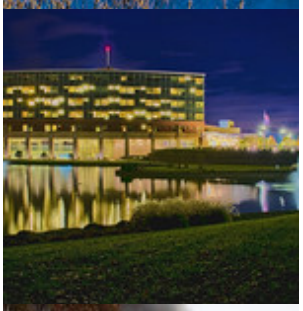
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/32275086277/in/pool-773339@N20)
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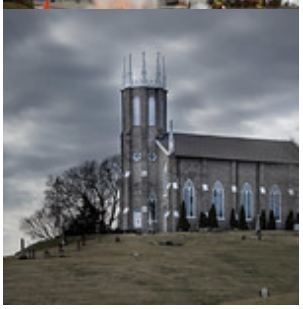
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/127721144@N05/46918072332/in/pool-773339@N20)

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