

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Governor Update

Gov. Ricketts began his Tuesday press briefing by giving updates on hospital capacity, as well as the State Patrol:

Hospital Data

Gov. Ricketts announced that as of today, Nebraska has:

- 48% hospital beds available
- 41% ICU beds available
- 76% ventilators available

TestNebraska

- Currently there are sites in Omaha, Grand Island, Lincoln, and Schuyler
- Of 2,943 tests conducted, 100 have been found positive
- 1,203 tests currently pending
- Average turnaround time is a little under 2 days

State Patrol

Col. John Bolduc of the Nebraska State Patrol joined the Governor to provide an update regarding traffic enforcement. Bolduc said that since March 19, the State Patrol has ticketed 177 people for driving over 100 miles per hour in Nebraska. Bolduc urged Nebraskans to drive safely, and within the law.

Q&A

Q: Will bars be allowed to open in May?

A: Ricketts: Bars will not be opening in May; I can tell you that for certain.

Q: Are you tracking how many people are on the waiting list for TestNebraska tests?

A: Ricketts: No, we are not--I ask people to continue to be patient. Loosening the priorities for tests lead to a large surge in tests requests, which took up all the test dates. Continue to answer the daily emails sent out by TestNebraska and try to find a testing date that way.

Q: Have any State Patrol officers tested positive for COVID-19?

A: Bolduc: Fortunately, no. We have had a couple officers tested, but results were negative.

Q: How many COVID positive patients are on ventilators?

A: 56 COVID-positive patients are on ventilators, which is just 7% of all ventilators in the state.

Federal:

Agriculture

Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer led a bipartisan group of 18 senators in writing a letter to U.S. Attorney General William Barr. The letter asks Barr to investigate potential practices by meatpackers that could be illegal, such as market manipulation. From the [letter](#):

“We have heard growing concerns from cattle producers and feeders in our states about troubling practices in the cattle industry that the COVID-19 national emergency has intensified, including allegations of market manipulation, and coordinated behavior harmful to competition. These serious claims have been relayed in a request for further inquiry by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) from eleven state attorneys general this past week, in addition to a number of letters from Senators on the matter. We support these calls to action and request that the DOJ investigate suspected price manipulation and anticompetitive behavior in the highly concentrated cattle industry, in order to identify more clearly the factors contributing to a dire situation for producers.”

Congress

House Democrats revealed a new COVID-19 response bill Tuesday, which would be the costliest in American history at \$3 trillion.¹ Included in the proposed bill: money for state and local governments, more direct payments to Americans, money to expand testing and contact tracing, adjustments to SNAP, student loan relief, and funding for elections. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer sent a memo to House members on Tuesday stating that the House is expected to meet Friday morning to take a vote. However, Senate Republicans have warned House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that the measure will not pass in the Senate and have also maintained that another relief bill is not yet needed.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/12/politics/3-trillion-aid-package-democrats-house/index.html>