

## *State and Legislative Updates:*

### COVID-19 Dashboard

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services released new information regarding the [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). Some updates have been made to the dashboard, which now includes data on deaths per county. The dashboard has also added specific number data on available hospital and ICU beds, as well as ventilators. Before, the dashboard only listed the percentages of available beds and ventilators. To view the full press release, click [here](#).

### Governor Update

Gov. Pete Ricketts began his daily press briefing by reassuring viewers that Nebraska's healthcare system has not been overburdened by COVID-19. He revealed the latest figures in relation to Nebraska hospitals: 49% hospital beds available, 40% ICU beds available, and 78% ventilators are available. Gov. Ricketts also encouraged people to sign up for TestNebraska to get tested. As of today, 4,300 people have been tested through the program and received results back. Sites are now operating in Omaha, Lincoln, Lexington, and Norfolk.

### Hospitals

Gov. Ricketts announced that this week is Hospitals Week. Dr. Gary Anthone, Nebraska's chief medical officer, joined him in thanking all hospital administrators across the state. Anthone said nearly all hospitals willingly ended elective surgeries when it was necessary and have been great to work with even in these trying times. Gov. Ricketts formally proclaimed this week as Hospitals Week and presented the proclamation to Nemaha County Hospital CEO Marty Fattig, who is also the former chairman of the Nebraska Hospital Association.

### Contact Tracing

Felicia Quintana-Zinn, interim deputy director for health data and informatics for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, joined Gov. Ricketts to discuss the state's contact tracing efforts. Currently, DHHS has 227 contact tracers on their team, but the goal is to increase that team to 1,000 people. Quintana-Zinn said that if someone tests positive for COVID-19, the local health department or a contact tracer will reach out to that person and give them instructions on what to do. She said it is helpful to have a calendar nearby when a contact tracer calls, so you can remember where you were, or who you had contact with, in days past. Quintana-Zinn said being honest is extremely important, as any information the health officials receive is used to help curb the spread of the virus.

### Q&A

Q: When will the Nebraska Legislature reconvene?

A: Ricketts: That is a question for Speaker Scheer, and I encourage you to reach out to him with that question.

Q: When will wedding venues be allowed to open again?

A: Ricketts: It's hard to say, we have to take things one step at a time and get some time underneath our belt before loosening more restrictions.

Q: Last week, the Nebraska Department of Labor had completed 81% of unemployment applications. Has that number changed?

A: Ricketts: No, it has not, but we have received more applications in the past week, so applications are being processed—we just have more coming in each week.

## *Federal:*

### Census Deadlines

In the proposed COVID-19 relief bill that was introduced by House Democrats last week (also known as the Heroes Act), a provision is included that would extend the deadline for the Census Bureau to submit census results. <sup>1</sup> The deadline would be extended four months, and results that could be extended include the latest state population counts used to redistrict congressional seats, as well as data used to remap voting districts. Also included in the Heroes Act is a provision that would keep the White House from using government records to produce data about the citizenship status of every U.S. resident. The bill also would require the Census Bureau Director to provide a monthly progress report to members of Congress.

### More on Heroes Act

According to numerous Senate Republicans, no action will be taken on the proposed Heroes Act in the Senate until after the Memorial Day Recess. <sup>2</sup> Senate Republicans remain skeptical of the bill, with some who would like to see the results of the CARES Act before crafting another package. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) said that lawmakers need to first make sure all the funds allocated in the CARES Act are going where intended, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has taken a similar position.

There are a few fixes GOP Senate members would like to see made in the coming weeks. Reportedly, they would like to address problems with the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, which may need a legislative fix in regard to the rule that business owners have to use 75% of their loans to have them forgiven. Republicans are also interested in avenues that could incentivize workers to return to work after being on unemployment.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/12/854909600/in-covid-19-relief-bill-house-democrats-propose-pushing-census-deadlines>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/13/politics/senate-stimulus-plans-vote-memorial-day/index.html>