



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

COVID-19 BRIEFING May 26, 2020

3:00 PM (CST)

Good afternoon. I hope everyone had a good holiday weekend and was able to spend some time with family and friends.

I know there was a lot in the news this weekend about the Lake of the Ozarks. Unfortunately, there were some poor decisions that were made, and social distancing was not followed.

When social distancing is not followed, it is potentially dangerous for EVERYONE, especially our most at-risk individuals.

That said, the Lake of the Ozarks is a small sample of Missouri. While poor choices were made by some at the lake, there were many other Missourians across the state who DID make safe and responsible choices over the holiday weekend.

I got to see this firsthand at my granddaughter's high school graduation in Sparta on Thursday night and at church on Sunday.

Overall, we have witnessed responsible practices by our citizens, and these efforts have made a positive difference for our entire state.

We know that many people are excited about the progress that we have made during the reopening.

Whether it be your church ... favorite restaurant ... business ... sporting event ... or wherever else you are eager to get back to, the sum of all of these places and things is "Our Missouri," and we must remember that is about a cause much bigger than ourselves.

We have taken positive steps to move Missouri forward, and we must ALL continue to practice the recommendations that will keep our state headed in a safe and healthy direction.

Today, we had more good news about business expansion in Missouri.

As we continue to move forward with reopening our economy, two companies have decided to expand underground in Missouri.



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FarmFoods and Nostrum Laboratories are expanding in Missouri's Hunt Midwest Subtropolis – a 55,000,000 square foot manmade limestone cave that has been renovated into an underground business complex offering a safe and secure location for companies to grow.

These announcements are another example of the positive things happening in our state and show that even in the aftermath of COVID-19, Missouri is still a top location for business expansion.

Another recent topic of concern has been Medicaid expansion and when it will be placed on the ballot. Today, I made the decision to place Medicaid expansion on the August primary ballot.

I want to be clear that this is about POLICY, not politics.

At a time when our state is undergoing a major health, economic, and budget crisis, we need to know exactly where we stand when it comes to a massive spending initiative for Missouri.

Our government is working day and night to make the best decisions for the people of this state, and to make those decisions, we need to know as much information as soon as possible.

Missouri is ALREADY one of the top 5 states for general revenue spending on Medicaid, and are estimating we will need an additional \$88 million dollars in general revenue through 2021 because of COVID-19.

So, pass or fail, it is important that we understand the implications of what would be a massive new spending bill out of our already depleted general revenue.

Missourians will determine the outcome, and it is critical that we hear their decision as soon as possible, which is why we are placing it on the August ballot.

This will give us more time to account for the outcome in our state budget.

Last week, I announced a plan to rapidly increase testing volume in the state of Missouri with a goal of reaching 7,500 tests per day.

Just to recap, the plan includes three main testing strategies – box-in outbreaks, sentinel testing, and community sampling.

Even over the holiday weekend, we made some good progress on testing, and we will continue to take even more aggressive action throughout this week and next week.



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I know there has been some things out there about “Memorial Day Weekend” increases.

I want to point out that the new positive cases over the weekend are not necessarily a direct reflection of Memorial Day.

As I have said many times, our actions today will have an impact days and weeks from now, so much of what took place over Memorial Day Weekend will be seen in future data.

And again, the more testing we do, the more positive cases there will be, but this does NOT mean there has been a surge or that our health care system is overwhelmed. Our hospitals are still in good shape, and we continue to monitor this on a daily basis.

Today, we started community testing in Jackson and St. Charles counties and will be testing in Boone, Cape Girardeau, Greene, and Jefferson counties next week.

Any Missouri resident who would like to be tested for COVID-19 can do so at these sites at no cost. Missouri residency is the ONLY requirement – you do not have to live in the county offering community testing OR be experiencing symptoms.

Also today, sentinel testing will begin taking place in all Missouri Department of Corrections adult institutions.

Director Precythe is here to give an update.

(DIRECTOR PRECYTHE SPEAKS)

Thank you, Anne.

I will say this again and again – testing is the key to Missouri’s full recovery.

In order to restore consumer confidence and bring back our economy, we MUST significantly increase our testing numbers.

More tests means more data, which gives us a clearer grasp on the situation in Missouri and more reassurance to the people of our state that it IS okay to move forward.

That said, I want to remind all Missourians to continue to be safe, smart, and proactive.

Even though things are improving, the virus is not gone, and we must continue taking steps to protect ourselves and everyone around us.

Thank you and God bless.