



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

COVID-19 BRIEFING
June 1, 2020

3:00 PM (CST)

Good afternoon and thank you for being here.

First let me say that we are deeply saddened by the tragic death of George Floyd.

As you know, there were many protests that took place in Missouri and across the nation over the weekend. What happened to him was very wrong, and it has filled Americans everywhere with sadness, grief, and anger.

We are also saddened by the acts of violence that have transpired across our state and nation in response to this event.

Citizens have every right to peacefully assemble and protest, and we support those who are calling for justice and peace.

However, an element has seized on these peaceful demonstrations to commit violent acts that endanger the lives of citizens and bring destruction to our communities.

This violence not only threatens public safety. It drowns out the voices of the peaceful demonstrators calling for justice and working to improve our nation.

On Saturday, I signed an Executive Order activating the Missouri National Guard to assist local authorities.

At this time, we are taking a proactive approach to protect the people of this state. The National Guard and Highway Patrol stand ready to assist if needed.

I want to thank our law enforcement officers across Missouri for their efforts this weekend to maintain order and peace.

We support peaceful protestors, and we are committed to protecting the lawful exercise of these rights. But violence and destruction will never be the answer.

It does not help us achieve justice or peace. Instead, it terrorizes innocent people and families, destroys our communities, and creates more anger and pain.



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Every citizen deserves to be safe and protected, and to change things, we must not tear each other down but stand together peacefully.

It's hard to believe that it's been just over 75 days since our first COVID-19 case in Missouri and that we're almost halfway through 2020.

Up until this point in my administration, we have been very fortunate to have a booming economy with record low unemployment and high wage growth.

We have, at many times, had more jobs available than we have had people to fill them. Because of this, we have been able to focus on our workforce and infrastructure.

During these times, we have also been able to put forward responsible and conservative budgets to the General Assembly.

Last year, we were able to leave \$100 million dollars on the bottom line in order to respond to any unanticipated revenue declines and we are thankful we did after everything that has happened.

When we began this fiscal year, we anticipated economic growth, and we based our budget on that growth. However, it goes without saying that COVID-19 has had SEVERE impacts on our anticipated economic growth.

This is truly unlike anything we have ever experienced before. We are now expecting significant revenue declines, some of which may be larger than those experienced during the Great Recession.

Just to put things into perspective, Missouri saw a decline of over 300,000 jobs between March and April alone – a decline of over 10 percent.

Our unemployment rate, which has been at near-historic lows for much of my administration, rose from 3.9 percent to 9.7 percent in April.

We could have never imagined that this is where we would be today, but we've had to face the reality of the situation and make some extremely difficult decisions regarding our state budget.

We have already had to withhold over \$220 million dollars due to budget concerns resulting from COVID-19. In addition to these restrictions, we will be restricting another \$209 million dollars by the end of June.



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These restrictions include reduced funding for:

- The Office of Administration,
- The Department of Corrections,
- The Department of Health and Senior Services,
- The Department of Social Services,
- The Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, and
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Of this round of restrictions, over \$41 million dollars in general revenue will be withheld from the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

For DESE, over \$131 million dollars will be restricted, including \$123 million dollars from the Foundation Formula. Fully funded, the Foundation Formula is over \$3.5 billion dollars.

In order to make it as fair as possible, I have waived the “hold harmless” statute. The waiver of this statute means hold harmless districts are not exempt from these withholdings.

All local education agencies, including charter schools, will share proportionately in this budget shortfall.

I have ALWAYS been a strong supporter of education. These were extremely difficult decisions I never thought I would have to make a few months ago.

During my legislative career, I have consistently voted for fully funded education budgets. As Governor, I have proposed budgets that fully funded education. Before COVID-19, one of our priorities for this year was to start looking at ways to increase teacher pay.

As difficult as these decisions are, we are experiencing an unprecedented economic downturn, which means we are having to make unprecedented adjustments in our budget.

We have had numerous conversations with DESE, the State Board of Education, superintendents, and administrators to keep them as informed as possible throughout the COVID-19 crisis.



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It is important to make these decisions now so school districts can adjust before next school year. Our intent is to withhold now and avoid withholds once school begins.

In the short term, we will be able to utilize \$187 million dollars in federal funds distributed as Title 1 dollars to help a majority of school districts.

Today, Commissioner Vandeven is here to talk more about these funds.

(COMMISSIONER VANDEVEN SPEAKS)

Thank you, Margie.

Commissioner Mulligan is also here to talk more about Higher Education.

(COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN SPEAKS)

Thank you, Zora.

Even with everything going on around us – COVID-19, the economy, and civil unrest – we must keep pushing forward.

This state has been through tough times before, and we will get through this by working together for a better future for our families and future generations.

Please remember to be safe, be smart, and be responsible.

Thank you and God bless.