

Gov. Walz Pushes To End COVID Emergency But Keep Certain Powers

By [Esme Murphy](#) June 30, 2021 at 7:13 pm

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MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) — After a political struggle that lasted for over a year, the legislature abruptly ended Gov. Tim Walz's nearly 16 months of emergency powers overnight.

Walz tried to get an amendment passed that would have extended some of the powers until August, but in the end appears to have been outmaneuvered.

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State Sen. Michele Benson and other Republicans at the State Capitol were gloating over the series of maneuvers overnight that left Walz without any emergency powers, thwarting his attempt to pass an amendment to keep some of those powers in place.

"We are not designed to have all power rest with one person," Benson said.



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Like most states, Minnesota approved with bipartisan support emergency powers for the governor in March 2020, during the early days of the pandemic.

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"I do think we needed it in the beginning," Minnesota House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt said. "It's very confusing what (Walz) was up to last night, but the legislature took a very decisive action to end his emergency powers. It was long overdue."

But the pandemic lasted longer than anyone predicted and Walz used the emergency powers to order mask mandates, close businesses and restaurants, order distance learning for schools and open state testing and vaccination sites, among other things.

"I am very confident in saying that many more Minnesotans would be dead today if we did not take the steps that we did," Minnesota House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler said.

Continuing the emergency powers required the governor to call back the legislature into special session every month, so there were nine special sessions in addition to the regular session. The debates each time adding to the partisan divide over the state and federal governments' response to COVID-19.

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Walz did not make any public statements Wednesday.

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