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**CAPITOL BUREAU**

# GOP lawmakers end Kansas' state of emergency for COVID; Gov. Kelly responds to decision



Senate President Ty Masterson, R-Andover, presides over a session of the Senate at the Statehouse on May 5, 2021, in Topeka, Kan. Top Republicans on Tuesday, June 15 ended Kansas' state of emergency for the coronavirus pandemic, refusing to consider Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's arguments that it is still necessary for vaccinations and some testing for COVID-19. Masterson announced the cancellation of a meeting of eight legislative leaders set for Tuesday afternoon. (AP Photo/John Hanna)

by: Michael Dakota

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TOPEKA, Kan. (KSNT) – Top Republicans are ending Kansas' state of emergency for the coronavirus pandemic.

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Senate President Ty Masterson announced the cancellation of a meeting of eight legislative leaders set for Tuesday afternoon. A law enacted in late March required the legislative leaders to sign off on an extension.

As a result, the statewide emergency declaration will expire as scheduled on June 15, 2021.

*"At last month's LCC meeting, a majority of legislative leaders made it clear that June 15th was likely to be the end of the state of emergency – that after 15 months, it is time for Kansas to return to normal. As such, the LCC recommended the governor develop an exit strategy to end the emergency – however, after reviewing the governor's letter, it appears the governor opted for an extension strategy."*

**- PRESIDENT TY MASTERSON, VICE PRESIDENT RICK WILBORN AND MAJORITY LEADER LARRY ALLEY**

Gov. Laura Kelly issued the following statement regarding the decision Tuesday.

*"I asked Republican leaders to extend the disaster declaration until August to boost efforts to vaccinate our children before school starts, support our local governments, and help get our state back to normal. A state disaster response has never been, and should not be, political. The actions by a select few Republicans in the Legislature will make our response more difficult.*

*"We will move forward in spite of this political obstruction and continue to work with our partners and communities to support our schools, businesses, and all Kansans through this pandemic."*

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As of this week, CDC numbers show about 47.5% of people ages 12 and up in Kansas are fully vaccinated, and it's a number the state is working hard to increase.

*"The decision by Kansas Republican leaders to end the disaster declaration is nothing more than reckless political action that risks the health of Kansas families and our small businesses. To be clear, ending the disaster declaration doesn't end the pandemic, it only makes it more difficult for the state to administer vaccines – especially to our children who will be going back to school come August."*

- KDP CHAIRWOMAN VICKI HIATT

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