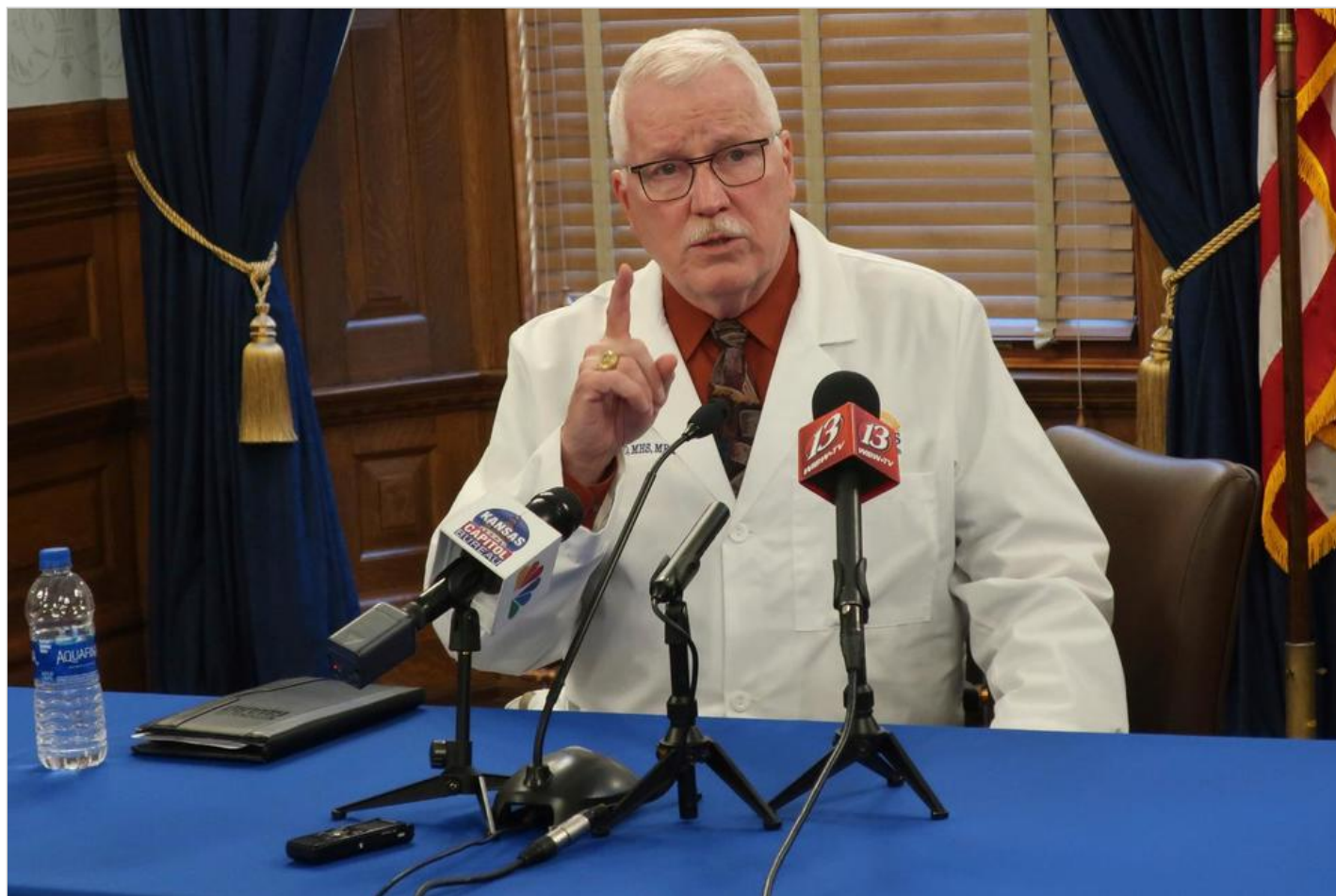


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Kansas COVID-19 Hospitalizations Spike; Emergency Extended

Top Republican legislators have signed off on Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's request to extend a state of emergency for the coronavirus pandemic.

By Associated Press, Wire Service Content Oct. 7, 2020



Dr. Lee Norman, the head of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, answers questions from reporters during a news conference about the coronavirus pandemic, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. Norman says the state's hospitals will be stressed this fall and winter because of the pandemic and the state's annual flu season. (AP Photo/John Hanna) THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BY JOHN HANNA, Associated Press



as the state set another record for COVID-19-related hospitalizations.

Eight leaders of the GOP-controlled Legislature, six of them Republicans, quickly and unanimously approved Kelly's plan to extend the state of emergency until Nov. 15. Under a law enacted in June, top lawmakers must consider an extension once a month, and without their approval, the state of emergency would have expired Oct. 15, possibly hindering the ability of the state to move supplies and personnel around.

Wednesday's meeting was in sharp contrast to a contentious one last month, when top Republican leaders extracted a public promise from Kelly not to try to close businesses statewide again as she did in the spring. GOP leaders and the governor have been at odds for months over her handling of the pandemic and have forced her to accept local control over mandating mask-wearing, reopening schools and restricting businesses and public gatherings.

The state Department of Health and Environment reported that had another 1,244 new confirmed and probable coronavirus cases since Monday, an increase of 2%, to bring the pandemic total to 63,952. The state averaged 600 new cases a day during the seven-day period ending Wednesday.

"It's really time that we need to work to unite together as people. We need to fight this virus and not fight with each other," Dr. Lee Norman, the head of the state health department, said during a Statehouse news conference. "The number of cases being hospitalized is increasing. It's because we're having so many more total cases."

The health department also reported 85 new coronavirus-related hospitalizations since Monday, an increase of 2.8% for a pandemic total of 3,121. The state averaged 29.14 new hospitalizations a day for the seven days ending Wednesday, nearly 11% higher than the previous record of 26.29 for the seven days ending Monday.

Hospitalizations represent about 4.9% of the reported cases, and that percentage has fallen over time after being as high as 25% during the first weeks after the pandemic reached [Kansas](#) in early March.



possibility that this year's flu season will be light, partly because the coronavirus has prompted more mask wearing, but he expressed concern about dealing both with COVID-19 and the flu.

"Both the flu and COVID-19 will be spreading this fall," Norman said. "Our hospital resources are going to be strained this fall and winter."



COVID-19-related deaths have continued to represent about 1.1% of total cases. The state health department reported another 17 since Monday, to bring the total for the pandemic to 723.

Nine of the 10 counties seeing the largest increase in confirmed and probable cases during the past two weeks were rural counties in central or western Kansas with fewer than 7,200 residents.

Six were in northwest Kansas, led by Rawlins County, one of the last two in the state to report its first case. There, the number of cases increased from 20 to 67 in two weeks, or by 18.58 cases for every 1,000 residents. That's more than six times state's increase over the past two weeks was 3.0 cases per 1,000 residents.

"That's the nature of community spread," Norman said. "When there are weddings and funerals and schools, and extra-curricular activities, that's exactly how it spreads."

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