

# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Steve Bullock  
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney  
LT. GOVERNOR

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

### CONTACTS:

Marissa Perry, Communications Director, Governor's Office, (406) 444-4514

Erin Loranger, Press Secretary, Governor's Office, (406) 444-9725

## **Governor Bullock Lifts Stay at Home Order, Announces Plan to Begin Phased Reopening of Montana**

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced Montanans' collective actions to stay home and slow the spread of COVID-19 successfully flattened the curve and will allow the state to lift the stay at home order and begin a gradual and phased reopening starting on Monday.

**“There are very few states in the country that can say they have seen the number of positive cases decline over these past weeks. Montana can say that because, together, we have made that decline in cases possible,”** Governor Bullock said. **“While there is reason for optimism, I am going to ask Montanans to continue to go to great lengths to protect one another, to continue looking out for our neighbors who need it the most, and to continue being vigilant in every step we take.”**

The plan to gradually reopen was produced based on scientific evidence and data, and in consultation with public health experts, health care providers, business leaders, and emergency management professionals.

**“Because of Montana’s aggressive approach of shutting everything down early in the pandemic, we are in the fortuitous position of having a very low viral burden in the state. With that being said, I feel assured that a cautious, vigilant, and step wise approach to opening up our healthcare, commerce, and education sectors could be attempted. Keep in mind that for every two steps forward we might need to take a step back, but it is in everyone’s best interest that we try,”** Dr. Marc Mentel, president of the Montana Medical Association, said.

**“Local public health continues to work closely with Governor Bullock and our state partners to work towards a systematic reopening of Montana that minimizes the risk of viral spread. We appreciate the partnerships we have all across the state, which in no doubt, will continue to serve Montanans,”** Hillary Hanson, Public Health Officer at the Flathead City-County Health Department, said.

**“Montana and its hospitals moved swiftly and thoughtfully to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the results of this effort is demonstrated by a lower incidence of the virus in Montana when**

# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Steve Bullock  
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney  
LT. GOVERNOR

**compared to our neighboring states. Our hospitals responded to this public health emergency and remain prepared to serve our patients and communities and assist in restarting our economy,”** Rich Rasmussen, President and CEO of the Montana Hospital Association, said.

Montana’s plan to reopen and stay open relies on Montanans to adhere to social distancing guidelines whenever possible and continue to limit gatherings. Additionally, visitation at nursing homes will continue to be suspended and older Montanans and those who are immunocompromised should continue to follow the stay at home directive.

The stay at home order will expire on April 26th and some businesses will be able to reopen on April 27th if they can adhere to requirements to limit capacity and maintain physical distancing. Employers are directed to develop policies to keep employees and customers safe including teleworking when possible, enforcing social distancing protocols, and other measures as provided in an appendix of reopening guidelines.

Places of worship can become operational on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Restaurants, bars, breweries, and distilleries can begin providing some in-establishment services beginning May 4.

Businesses where groups gather without the ability to social distance including movie theaters, gyms, and other events where a large number of people might gather will remain closed.

On May 7, all schools will have the option to return to in-classroom teaching delivery at the discretion of local school boards. Montana’s travel quarantine will remain in effect and out of state travelers and residents arriving from another state or country back to Montana for non-work related purposes are required to quarantine for 14 days.

**“Our new normal is going to look different. This virus isn’t gone from Montana. So as we turn to support our main street businesses and get more families back to work during this time – as we should – we must also be sure to continue looking out for those around us and protecting everyone around us,”** Governor Bullock said.

Montana has aggressively managed the virus with a series of actions including suspending nursing home visitation, closing schools, closing higher risk businesses such as bars, restaurants, gyms and movie theaters, and enacting a stay at home order. Montanans working together to stay home and social distance bought precious time for hospitals to prepare to treat a potential surge in patients, and for the state to acquire necessary personal protective equipment and bolster testing to identify and mitigate new outbreaks. As a result, Montana has flattened the curve and has the lowest percentage of positive cases per capita when compared to its population and the lowest number of hospitalizations per capita in the nation.

# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Steve Bullock  
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney  
LT. GOVERNOR

While the plan includes several phases, there is no timeline to move into the next phase of reopening. Governor Bullock and his task force will continue to monitor cases closely and carefully to analyze if Montana is containing the virus.

The plan to reopen and the directive lifting the stay at home order is attached and posted online at:

###