

TRUMP, MINNESOTA, & COVID-19

August 2020

Since the beginning of the pandemic, President Trump has downplayed the threat of the virus, declined to listen to experts, and refused to take action to protect Americans from the health and economic toll of the outbreak. In states like Minnesota, his failures have exacerbated the consequences of the crisis.

QUICK LOOK:

- President Trump's failure to shore up supplies of protective equipment left care workers in Minnesota without adequate resources to fight the virus and slow the spread.
 - In March, one in five positive cases was a care worker, and the shortage of PPE in nursing homes allowed the virus to rip through vulnerable populations.
- President Trump's early failures on testing and supplies allowed the virus to gain a foothold in long-term care facilities, which account for 75% of COVID-19 deaths in the state.
- President Trump refused to create a national testing infrastructure, instead leaving states to fend for themselves. In Minnesota, this abdication of responsibility has caused persistent supply shortages and delayed results.
- President Trump is dangerously misleading the public about the risk that the virus poses to children, urging schools to reopen without adequate safety precautions. Thousands of young people across Minnesota have already tested positive for the virus.
- In slashing enhanced unemployment benefits, President Trump is putting half a million Minnesotans in dire financial straits.
- President Trump and Minnesota Republicans have undermined Governor Tim Walz as he tries to keep Minnesotans safe.

CASES & DEATHS SKYROCKETING

- As of August 16, 65152 people had [tested positive](#) for coronavirus in Minnesota.
- Cases are rising in Minnesota among young people. People between 20 to 29 age have the [highest total number](#) of confirmed infections in the state.
- More than 1700 people have [died](#) in Minnesota since the pandemic began.
- On August 13, Minnesota [reported](#) 12 deaths – the state's highest single day coronavirus death total since July 2.

TESTING DISASTER

- Testing in Minnesota has dropped even as cases surge. On August 11, Minnesota [reported](#) just one-third of the total tests conducted two days prior.
- Long-term care facilities are currently [reporting](#) backlogs of tests and delayed results as a result of a shortage of vital supplies.
 - Delayed results have hindered the ability of facilities to isolate infected residents before they infect others.
- In late July, national supply shortages forced labs across Minnesota to [slash](#) the number of tests samples run daily.
 - Minnesota based HealthPartners [announced](#) that they were limiting availability to testing "due to nationwide testing supply shortages" and their central lab was "been forced to cut testing capacity for non-hospitalized patients with respiratory illness."
- The federal government has [reportedly](#) diverted critical testing supplies away from Minnesota to other parts of the country.
- Senator Tina Smith [advocated](#) for a stronger federal response to testing and warned that she was hearing from Minnesota residents that tests were [taking weeks](#) to come back.

SCHOOL REOPENING DISASTER

- President Trump has urged schools across the country to reopen without regard for community spread, rising cases, or safety protocols. In doing so, he has falsely claimed that children are immune to the virus.
- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has similarly made false claims – asserting that children are “stoppers” of the virus and cannot transmit the virus to others.
- But children in Minnesota have been infected and become critically ill with the virus.
 - Minnesota Children’s Hospital [reported](#) that 72 children had been hospitalized since the beginning of the pandemic and 11 of those patients required ventilators.
 - More than 9000 Minnesota residents under 20 have [tested positive](#) for the virus.
 - On July 9, a 9-month old from Clay County [passed away](#) from coronavirus.
- In contrast with President Trump, Governor Tim Walz [released](#) localized guidance on the reopening of schools that accounts for rising cases and spread.
 - The localized plan allows districts that meet particular thresholds to reopen, while keeping students in hotpots at home.
 - The plan pairs school administrators with state health and education officials to evaluate how the virus is spreading in local communities.

ECONOMY IN SHAMBLES

- President Trump’s mishandling of the virus [has resulted](#) in catastrophic economic consequences – including for the people of Minnesota. Unemployment in Minnesota hit an all-time high of 9.9% in May, and, as of late June, [was still](#) nearly triple what it was in February.
- After President Trump and Republicans allowed enhanced unemployment benefits for Americans to expire, President Trump [ordered states](#) like Minnesota to shoulder the cost of a slashed payment – a burdensome expense for states struggling to keep afloat amid the pandemic.
- Half a million Minnesotans – one-sixth of the state’s workforce – [are impacted](#) by the expiration of enhanced unemployment benefits. Food banks across the state are expecting a 65% surge in demand while McKinsey predicts that growing hunger will leave one in eight Minnesotans unable to afford food for the first time in a century.

PPE SHORTAGES

- President Trump’s failure to procure protective equipment and to enhance the domestic supply chain is still causing concern for officials in Minnesota, who worry that PPE shortages will re-emerge as cases rise.
- In mid-July, the Minnesota Department of Health [said](#) it was “looking to source” high-quality masks and gowns, as an order of 2.2 million face masks and 2.9 million N95 respirators was “past due.”
- Nurses in Minnesota [reported](#) reusing items like N95 respirators to conserve stores against a looming supply shortage as late as July.
- In March, [one in five](#) COVID-19 in Minnesota cases was a health care worker.

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES UNDER SIEGE

- As late as June, advocates for the elderly [asserted](#) that President Trump failed to provide adequate testing and protective gear to nursing homes, thereby allowing the virus to spread uncontrolled.
- Harvard researcher Dave Grabowski, who serves on a nonpartisan commission advising Congress about Medicare, [proposed](#) “a federal effort to regularly test nursing home staff and residents” and said “**The federal government needs to own this issue.**”
- But the Trump administration hasn’t owned the issue. On August 11, The Star Tribune [reported](#) infections were on the rise in long-term care and assisted living facilities.
- By mid-August, 75% of COVID-19 deaths in Minnesota have come from residents [in long-term care and assisted living facilities](#).

RUSHED REOPENING; TRUMP ATTACKING THE STATE

- On April 17, Trump [tweeted](#) “LIBERATE MINNESOTA” in support of anti-lockdown protestors gathering outside of the home of Governor Tim Walz.
- Republicans in Minnesota [cheered](#) protests against Governor Tim Walz’s stay-at-home orders that were designed to keep Minnesotans safe.
- Minnesota Republicans [came out](#) against any extension of Governor Walz’s stay-at-home orders.

FOOD PLANTS FACING CRISIS

- President Trump declined to take action early on to protect essential workers in food processing facilities. As the virus ripped through plants, the government ignored warnings from workers and advocates.
- President Trump in late April [used the powers](#) of the Defense Production Act to force plants to stay open – without also taking steps to protect workers.
- In August, dozens of cases [were confirmed](#) among workers at a Seneca Foods processing plant in Glencoe, Minnesota. As of August 12, the outbreak had already infected 33 workers and led to 3 hospitalizations.

MASK MANDATE UNDER ASSAULT

- President Trump has routinely [ridiculed](#) masks and [refuses](#) to implement a nationwide mask mandate – despite that research [suggests](#) masks could reduce transmission of the virus by as much as 80%.
- On July 22, Governor Walz announced a mask mandate for the state of Minnesota. Walz told reporters that he [hoped](#) Republicans in the state legislature would implement a mask mandate, but they refused.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

- President Trump’s failure to contain the virus has disproportionately impacted Black people and people of color across the country, including in Minnesota.
- Nearly 1 in 2 Black workers in Minnesota [have filed](#) for unemployment benefits since the pandemic began, compared to only 1 in 4 white workers.
- More than one quarter of Black workers are still filing weekly unemployment claims, compared to 9% of white workers.
- Black Minnesotans [account for](#) 6.1% of the state’s population, but 28.9% of COVID-19 cases.
- Hispanic or Latino people account for just 5% of Minnesota’s population, but 22% of the state’s COVID-19 cases.