

# **COVID-19 National Emergency Declaration Termination Speech**

## **3/3/22**

Mr./Madam President,

I rise today in support of S. J. Res. 38, a Resolution to terminate the COVID-19 national emergency declaration. After nearly two years of living under this state of emergency, the American people are worn out and yearning to breathe free; they long for their God-given freedoms, and for leaders to take their side.

We as a nation must begin to learn to live with COVID. The robust powers this emergency declaration provides the federal government are no longer necessary and Congress must debate, and ultimately repeal them, in order to begin the process of unwinding the powers the government took hold of during the peak of the crisis.

As we contemplate what returning to normal means, most Americans accept that COVID will likely never be entirely behind us, and setting zero COVID cases as a victory condition is more harmful than good.

That being said, of course we must respect the virus, and protect the vulnerable. But we also must accept that personal responsibility, not government mandates and restrictions, must govern our approach to the virus going forward.

We must repeal this emergency declaration today to deliver a symbolic victory to our citizens that normalcy is around the corner and that limited government and our constitutional rights still reign supreme. It's high time to stop talking about restrictions and the unknown. We must chart a new course to victory today that respects the virus and our freedoms.

Let's look back on the recent history of this national emergency declaration. On March 13, 2020, President Trump first declared the "National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease Outbreak."

Two days prior, following an alarming rate of transmission, the World Health Organization had declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Little was known about the rapidly spreading virus at the time but President Trump's declaration was intended to grant himself, as Chief Executive, additional authorities to bolster the federal government's efforts to control the virus and ease the burden on our healthcare system.

Less than a week later, California became the first state to issue a statewide stay-at-home order and lockdowns, mask mandates, school closures and capacity limits commenced all across the nation.

These were the earliest, most frightening days of the pandemic when our understanding of the virus was minimal and all measures were needed to react to a global contagion unlike anything seen in nearly a century.

Almost a year later and just over a month after his Inauguration in February 2021, President Biden justifiably went on to extend the COVID-19 national emergency declaration for another year, a requirement under the National Emergencies Act, that had it not been acted on would have resulted in the automatic termination of the declaration.

At the time of President Biden's initial extension, only 50 million doses of the vaccine had been administered and eligibility was largely limited to health care workers, first responders and vulnerable populations. It would be weeks or months before all adults would be eligible in all 50 states. Viral treatments and therapeutics were scarcely available to the public. All the while the potentially more severe and contagious Delta variant was brewing in other regions of the world before it was detected and became the dominant strain here at home.

The situation on the ground in the United States has changed drastically since these early stages of the pandemic. Thanks to American innovation and Operation Warp Speed, the United States now has multiple vaccines available to all Americans over the age of 5 years old. Everyone ages 12

and older is also eligible for a booster shot if they want further inoculation.

In fact, more than 550 million shots have been administered in the United States with 215 million people fully vaccinated, including 89 percent of individuals 65 and up. Additionally, the FDA has authorized two oral antivirals and monoclonal antibody treatments are available for those at high risk of becoming seriously ill.

Omicron is now the dominant variant in the United States accounting for 97 percent of cases. While more contagious, Omicron tends to result in more mild symptoms in infected individuals. In Kansas, the daily case average in recent weeks has decreased 99 percent, hospitalizations are down about 80 percent, and deaths are down 98 percent. Nationally, we are seeing drastic decreases in these three categories as well. Perhaps most importantly, today at least 94 percent of Americans have some level of immunization.

Accordingly, states in every corner of the nation are repealing indoor mask mandates, including blue states who have most adamantly enforced them. Yes indeed, Freedom loving Americans who are worn out by these draconian lockdowns and mandates are giving a sigh of relief.

Despite all these advances and our possession of a much greater understanding of the virus, President Biden stealthily extended the national emergency declaration once again on a late Friday afternoon two weeks ago.

Next, let us lay out some of the effects these policies have had on the American people and why we must abandon this approach, shrink the federal response and move towards a more nimble and effective locally based community strategy that allows individual citizens and local health officials to exercise and promote old-fashioned self-responsibility and individual choice.

Mr./Madam President, the first COVID-19 wave in the spring of 2020 took the world by surprise. The spread of cases globally and in the United States was met with government ordered lockdowns abroad and here at home. In just a few weeks, lockdowns put more than 10 million Americans out of work, with 6.6 million people applying for unemployment benefits in the last week of March alone.

These lockdowns, some of which extended for months in certain states, and the subsequent mandates and requirements that still remain in place have had dramatically negative impacts on our quality of life and have been minimally beneficial.

A recent study from Johns Hopkins University found lockdowns only reduced the COVID-19 death rate by 0.2 percent. The researchers noted that while “lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, they have imposed enormous economic and social costs where they have been adopted.”

These costs have been felt at an alarming rate and in a number of aspects of American life. Drug overdose deaths rose by 30% in 2020, hitting the highest number ever recorded. Symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder and use of mental health care among adults increased by 36.4% from August 2020 to February 2021.

The numbers for our children are more troubling. The CDC found between March and October 2020, emergency department visits for mental health emergencies rose by 24% for children ages 5-11 years and 31% for children ages 12-17 years.

In addition, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts increased nearly 51% among girls ages 12-17 years in early 2021 compared to the same period in 2019.

School closures in the 2020–21 academic year left students five months behind on mathematics and four months behind in reading. Disadvantaged and low-income schools disproportionately felt the impact.

These societal ills have been compounded by mask mandates, vaccine mandates, and isolation orders. Keeping this emergency declaration in place will cause public health officials and governments at all levels to maintain the possibility of allowing them to remain or resurrecting them.

And much like America's alcohol prohibition a century ago, these mandates will make criminals out of us all, as we all are guilty of disregarding them at one point or another. This only creates more disrespect for law and order. We must not allow this to happen.

And, I have to add, the mortality rate from COVID for the United States is 75 percent higher than Sweden's, despite Sweden issuing no shut downs or masks mandates. Not surprisingly, their economy is humming ahead of ours at 5% rate above Pre-pandemic levels.

All this being said once again, I beg this administration and the national media to stop the fear mongering, to share all the science, and let our people go!

The Democrats' COVID obsession has also resulted in out of control spending and massive debt. Congress has appropriated \$6 trillion to respond to the crisis. That means federal spending to combat the pandemic has well surpassed the \$4.1 trillion the U.S. spent waging World War II.

Throw in the roughly \$1.4 trillion spent on World War I, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War combined and it still would not exceed what we've spent on COVID relief. Let me say that another way. We have borrowed and spent more money on COVID than all the major wars combined of the 20th century.

While the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act passed with nearly unanimous consent in both this body and the House, President Biden and Democrats in Congress insisted more was needed.

Despite warnings from economists on all ends of the political spectrum that it would harm our economy, Democrats rammed through a highly partisan \$1.9 trillion spending package that has overheated our economy. The bill was a response to a problem that was already fixing itself.

Shockingly, only nine percent of this funding was related to health care and less than one percent was dedicated to vaccines. Instead, the funding, like the drawn out, unnecessary heavy handed health restrictions, was meant to implement drastic changes to our way of life and system of governance and expand big government socialism.

Not to mention, it has resulted in the highest level of inflation we've seen in this country in 40 years. As one economist put it, the U.S. stimulus has been in a "category of its own" and has resulted in more inflation "than almost any other advanced economy in the world."

With hundreds of billions of funds for schools and state governments unspent, the President announced during his State of the Union that he plans to send a supplemental COVID relief funding request to Congress. Our nation's emergency posture to this virus is driving out of control spending, fueling inflation, and strapping our children and grandchildren with more than \$30 trillion in debt.

Indeed at this time our national debt is a greater threat to our nation than COVID. This alone is another reason to end this declaration.

Let me turn briefly to the Executive's emergency authority and Congresses role in delegating those powers. Since Article II of the Constitution does not grant the President emergency powers, all such authority is granted by Congress. Many of these authorities are provided through three laws:

- The National Emergencies Act,
- The Stafford Act, and
- The Public Health Service Act.

All three have been applied to the COVID response but the National Emergencies Act grants congressional oversight over a declaration by the President. Before I get into the need to exercise that Congressional authority, let me quickly discuss what repealing this emergency declaration will not do.

First, terminating this emergency declaration would not impact the Title 42 order currently in place and being exercised at our southern border that allows border officials to expel illegal aliens. The crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border has been fueled by this administration's decision to resume catch and release, halt construction of the border wall, and promise half a million dollars to immigrant families who broke our laws.

As a result, the number of illegal immigrants crossing our southern border has hit the highest level in more than 20 years under President Biden.

I can assure you Republicans intention is not to take away the only tool being utilized at our southern border to stem the tide of illegal immigrants pouring in. The authority for this order lies within the Secretary of Health and Human Services' public health emergency declaration made on January 31, 2020 under the Public Health Service Act.

The most recent internal review of the Title 42 submitted by CDC Director Walensky on February 2<sup>nd</sup> found that the order needed to remain in place. Republicans agree that the external threat of COVID coming across the border unchecked from other nations preserves the need for this order to remain in place and for us to pass legislation outside of these emergency declarations to further secure our porous border.

Second, terminating the emergency declaration would not impact the waivers issued by the HHS Secretary. These critical flexibilities – including increased access to care via telehealth – has been crucial to our ability to combat this virus. The telehealth waivers will NOT be impacted by removing the NEA.

I'm a cosponsor of legislation to make many of these successful telehealth waivers permanent and we must do so after the public health emergency expires and we return to normal.

Until today, Congress has failed to fulfill our duty and oversight responsibilities laid out in the National Emergencies Act, ceding immense, unchecked power to the Executive branch. We must, as Democrat Representative from the great state of Kentucky Romano Mazzoli stated when this bill was being debated in 1975,

“Consciously and deliberately [force] ourselves to come to grips periodically—and ultimately—[deal] with the vexing problems of national emergencies. The blame as well as the glory will be on the shoulders of the Congress. But that is as it is supposed to be—that is the responsible course.”

And so Mr. President, we are here today to debate the responsible course forward.

While the COVID-19 emergency declaration has not utilized all powers provided to the President, major actions have been taken as a direct result of the declaration. Our Ready Reserve remains active, our Coast Guard is stretched, and the staggeringly expensive student loan relief remains in place.

More importantly though, this declaration drives our federal government to maintain its massive emergency response infrastructure and drives left wing politicians in Congress to push harmful mandates and unrestrained spending. These powers are no longer needed. We have tools to minimize the impact of the virus and live with it.

This idea of living with COVID is not a fringe position held by Republicans. Democrat New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy recently said it was time to "learn how to live" with it.



Democrat governors in Nevada, Rhode Island, New York, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois and Oregon have announced they're lifting certain mask mandates and easing other restrictions.

Internationally, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand are working towards "living with COVID" phases. Just last week, the British Prime Minister announced that part of his "living with COVID" plan would even include the repeal of legal requirements for those who test positive for COVID to self-isolate.

And while President Biden claimed during his State of the Union address that "we are moving forward safely, back to more normal routines," his actions don't match his words. His call for a "reset" and claims to be loosening government's intrusions into our lives by way of COVID restrictions are half-truths at best. We know this because all these things are true:

- Despite being presented with the devastating effects of lockdowns, school and indoor mask mandates, and other restrictions, the President renewed the federal government's national emergency declaration again. In fact, the President just hours ago issued a veto threat of this resolution should it make it to his desk.
- The CDC continues to hide data points they believe would be "misinterpreted" by those outside of the swamp they view as ignorant. This data includes information on who is receiving booster shots, the effectiveness of vaccines for certain age groups, and figures related to reinfections. This allows the federal government to suppress information that contradicts their one-size-fits-all approach and preserve intrusive government policies.
- Despite the President patting himself on the back for relaxing mask mandates we still have in place the CDC order that requires masks on airplanes, in Uber's, and on your children's school buses.
- The administration has only withdrawn one of their vaccines mandates, the OSHA mandate on employers with more than 100

employees, after SCOTUS struck it down. Three mandates are thankfully enjoined by the courts but deadlines for CMS mandate on health care workers are beginning to be enforce. Just yesterday, 44 Senate Democrats voted to keep that mandate in place despite its constitutional violation of states police powers, harm to an already weak health care workforce, and outdated science that guided the promulgation of the rule.

- The President’s National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan asks Congress to approve funding that would expand the production of vaccines to 1 billion doses a year. That equates to three doses for every person in America. Do they plan to mandate these? Dr. Fauci recently led us to believe that might be the case when he said, “The potential future requirement for an additional boost... is being carefully monitored in real time.”
- And while we’ve prevented separated members of the military from receiving dishonorable discharges for choosing not to get the vaccine, the Defense Department has kicked out hundreds of our brave servicemen and women.

How can the President downplay the progress we’ve made in our ability to combat the virus and more importantly, how can he continue to pursue an invasive and coercive federal response that has eroded our freedoms and spread misery throughout this nation? Does he not hear the cry of the people who give him the power to be president?

As the United States enters the third year of COVID-19, 70 percent of Americans agree that “it’s time we accept that COVID is here to stay and we just need to get on with our lives.” President Biden and Congressional Democrats are out of touch with Americans. Maintaining these policies is no longer about science, or public health, or the will of the people.

**That is a guise.**

This is about power and using a global pandemic to grow government and lurch our nation towards socialism.

The suffering caused by the government's actions has had an immense impact on the daily lives of Americans in ways that will take years to correct, if ever.

We now know that these actions were wrong. The same people who argue to keep this emergency declaration in place are the same people who were wrong in their advocacy for those government actions.

- They were wrong when they told you not to be afraid to go to Chinese New Years' celebrations when the first cases were detected in the United States.
- They were wrong when they said it was racist to suspend inbound travel from China.
- They were wrong when they called you a conspiracy theorist for believing it was possible for this virus to have developed in nature OR have leaked from a laboratory.
- They were wrong when they told you lockdowns must remain in place.
- They were wrong when they told you masking your children was the only way they could attend in-person classes safely.
- They were wrong when they told you massive stimulus spending was necessary and would not lead to inflation.
- They were wrong when they told you that inflation would be transitory.
- And they were wrong when they denied that natural immunity provided a strong defense against COVID infection and severe symptoms.

They have been wrong nearly every step of the way during the response to this pandemic, always a day late and a dollar spent in the wrong direction.

Yet here they are, these same individuals who now reside in the White House and hold majorities in Congress, telling us it would be detrimental to our health to repeal the President's national emergency declaration. Their motivation is not genuine. It is a blatant effort to further extend the massive accumulation of power the federal government has extended across America over the last two years.

Today, yes today Congress must act to rein in this control and reassert our Article 1 authorities.

The Constitution demands it.

The authors of the National Emergencies Act demand it.

The protection of Americans liberties demands it.

We have the tools to protect the vulnerable and our populace is near full herd immunity – at 94%. Let's not listen to those who have wronged us and have been proven incorrect countless times throughout this pandemic.

Let's listen to common sense and reason.

Let's listen to science.

Let's listen to the people!

Let's abandon this COVID obsession and groupthink that has infiltrated the highest ranks of our federal government and lift this emergency declaration today.

Let's return the ability to make decisions related to the virus back to the American people.

Thank you Mr./Madam President. I yield back.

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