

***Governor Jared Polis Address to the State of Colorado, April 6, 2020  
as prepared for delivery***

My fellow Coloradans,

I speak to you this evening as we face one of the most dire and serious threats of our lifetime.

Exactly one month and one day ago, we confirmed the first case of this new coronavirus in Colorado.

Since then, in just one month — even though it feels like longer — it seems that our society has turned upside down.

The simple things we once took for granted -- taken away by a pandemic that has shocked our state, our nation, and our world.

It seems surreal. It seems like a cruel, ironic joke.

Here we are -- a state of people who love the outdoors suddenly quarantined inside, told not to visit our majestic mountain towns and world-class ski resorts.

A state with a booming economy suddenly specked with boarded up windows and empty shops.

A state of darers, dreamers, and doers suddenly boxed in by four walls, a floor and a ceiling.

I know many of you watching this evening are distressed, frustrated, and angry. Not just because we're all stuck inside but because we're unsure of what the future holds for ourselves and our loved ones.

We all want a timeline. When will this nightmare be over?

How will we pay the rent or mortgage? How will we keep the family business afloat? How can we keep our loved ones safe? Questions like these are keeping many Coloradans including me up at night.

It's okay to feel this way. You are not alone. This crisis is impacting us all in so many ways. This is unlike anything we have seen before in our lifetimes: a severe public health emergency and a severe economic emergency hitting us simultaneously.

We cannot live without an open and functional economy. People need to be free to engage in commerce, transactions, trade, and work. But we simply cannot function normally while we are living day-to-day with mortal fear of a deadly virus.

The sheer size of this crisis has forced us to take a series of drastic measures that we would have thought unthinkable, unimaginable just a month ago.

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And in order to save lives and prevent more widespread economic damage, we must continue to take bold action.

The President and top national health experts at the CDC have set a national goal of April 30th as the date that extreme social distancing measures like “stay at home” can likely end. I am hopeful we can get things going sooner in Colorado. We are not just hoping, but working hard, to be able to end as many of these devastating limitations on movement and commerce as quickly as possible.

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This evening, I am announcing our Colorado stay at home order is now planned to end April 26th -- two additional weeks beyond the current order and several days ahead of the national goal. If there is any way to safely end it sooner, then we will. And likewise if Coloradans aren't staying at home and the numbers of the dead and dying continue to increase, then it could go longer.

The reason for the April 26th date is very simple: because the data and the science tells us that staying at home, it is our best chance, our only chance, to avoid a catastrophic loss of life -- the deaths of thousands of our friends, our neighbors, our family members.

We are fighting an invisible enemy: a virus that is both deadly and extremely contagious. The fewer social interactions we have with one another, the fewer opportunities there are for people to spread the virus to others, and the fewer infections we will have in our state.

We are also in a race against the clock. Because if too many people get seriously ill at once from this virus, our health care system simply will not have the capacity to handle the flood of sick patients.

Without an adequate supply of masks and gloves for our health care workers, without an adequate supply of ventilators for the critically ill, and without the testing supplies that we need for mass testing and effective containment, our only option is to severely limit the number of person-to-person interactions.

Like many of you, I am beyond furious that we have been forced to shut down large portions of our economy -- putting tens of thousands out of a job -- because the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth doesn't have the supplies and testing that we need to mount a proper, more targeted response.

I know that we would all rather be going back to work tomorrow instead of collecting government stimulus checks or unemployment insurance. I know that business owners will have to make even harder decisions this month. I know we all want this to end as soon as possible.

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But if the choice is between a temporary shutdown and a catastrophic loss of life, the choice is clear.

These closures and restrictions will be temporary. But when you lose a life, you lose it forever.

And in fact, the economic consequences will be even more severe and more prolonged if we completely overload our hospitals. The longer this economic paralysis lasts, the fewer jobs there will be to return to, and the more difficult the recovery will be.

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Thankfully, a silver lining is beginning to emerge in Colorado.

The data is telling us that thanks to the actions we have taken, we're starting to make progress.

At the beginning of this crisis, the number of positive cases were doubling every 1 and a half days. Today, the number of positive cases are doubling every 6 days.

That means the spread of the virus is beginning to slow. That is a remarkable achievement by the people of this state. I want to thank each and every one of you who has been taking this seriously. You are truly helping to turn the tide against this virus.

This is not the time to abandon what has been working -- quite the opposite. We need to keep up this good work for a while longer so we can eventually return to a level of normalcy in our economy and our society.

That means washing your hands frequently with soap and water, wiping down surfaces, and avoiding touching your face.

Most importantly, we need to stay at home, and not go out unless it's absolutely necessary. If we do go out, we need to stay at least six feet away from others and wear a cloth facial covering or a mask when you must leave home.

You don't need to buy a mask, or even buy craft materials for one. You can simply make one from an old tshirt or just use a scarf. Any facial mask should cover your nose and mouth, and not interfere with your own breathing of course.

By following these steps -- you are saving lives. It could be the life of your grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, child, friend -- it could be your own.

The better job we do of staying in, the sooner we will be able to go back out. I know this isn't easy, but if we all do our part, we can beat this virus and get back to living our lives.

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Earlier today I spoke with a family where both parents -- Andrew Hudson and Christine Marquez Hudson -- both of their children, and both maternal grandparents were sickened with coronavirus. Five out of six have fully recovered, and grandma is well on the road to recovery as well.

They told me that the virus impacted each member of the family differently, and that the outcome could have been different if they didn't have early access to medical attention.

80-90% of those who get the virus won't need any medical assistance, but between 10-20% will need hospitalized care.

Right now, by using this valuable time to prepare for this coming surge in patients, we can make sure that everyone who has a chance to make it gets that chance.

We are moving heaven and earth to ensure that our health care workers have the gowns, the masks, the gloves, the face shields to keep them safe. Because they are our heroes. They are the ones who will take care of us when we are sick and we owe it to them to keep them healthy.

We are building more hospital beds and working to buy more ventilators to make sure that we have the capacity to handle the projected influx of severely sick patients.

I want to thank Colorado's hospitals and the Army Corps of Engineers for constructing hospital space to meet our needs.

Finally, we are using our creativity -- our innovative, scrappy and independent spirit -- to obtain more tests so that we can have widespread testing and containment like Korea and Taiwan, who have been able to successfully return to a level of normalcy by testing, quarantining, and isolating individuals instead of quarantining an entire society.

Recovery from both the virus and the economic devastation is possible, and we will get there. But all of these efforts will be in vain, and many lives will be lost, if we fail to do our crucial patriotic duty and stay home.

By staying home, wearing a mask when you go out, practicing proper physical distancing and proper hygiene -- you are literally saving lives.

The need to limit interactions is so great that the federal government is literally paying us to stay home. If you make up to \$75,000 as an individual, or \$150,000 as a couple, you will get \$1,200 per person. And no matter what your income level, you will get \$500 per child age 16 and under.

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This is not free money. The federal government agreed that paying Americans to stay inside is needed to prevent a full-scale humanitarian disaster. You need to earn this money by staying home except when absolutely necessary to go out.

The federal package also includes an incentive for companies to keep you on payroll, even if you're not able to go to work, to prevent even more layoffs.

On the state level, my administration is suspending regulations, deferring tax payments, eliminating red tape and in-person requirements for many license renewals, and working tirelessly to ensure we are supporting our businesses and workers as we all weather the storm and to ensure a speedy economic recovery when this is past us.

What matters now is not what you believe politically, your religious faith, your occupation, your age, your race... none of that matters here, none of that matters to the virus.

What matters is that the more we stay home, the better chance we have of beating this virus so we can all go back to the things that make life worth living.

Look -- I know this isn't easy. I know Coloradans are hurting. And this is no ordinary emergency.

We have faced crises before, floods, fires, and recessions, but this one is uniquely painful because we cannot be with each other.

In times of tragedy and difficulty, humanity comes together in fellowship. We mourn and celebrate together. We laugh together and we cry together. We find comfort in the company and the love of one another.

We can't do that right now physically.

But that doesn't mean we can't be with each other emotionally.

Use this time to reconnect with friends and loved ones.

Thankfully there has been amazing progress in how we can stay together even as we stay apart: email, phone, skype, zoom, facetime, we can see and hear our loved ones almost as if they were there. We had a group zoom with the grandparents and our kids this weekend. And I know many families are doing the same.

Let's stay positive. Because none of this is permanent.

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With time, we will have more hospital beds, and a mass testing and containment program in place, and the spread of the virus will be limited enough that we can get back to a fairly normal economy and society.

There will be a day in the not-too-distant future that we can be together once again.

When we can go to bars and restaurants, attend schools and universities, churches and temples. When grandparents can hug their grandchildren without fear of getting sick. When we can once again feel the wind against our face as we ski down our favorite ski runs and hike our favorite trails.

But that day is not today. Nor is it tomorrow.

Right now we need to dig deep into our souls to muster the resolve, the courage, the fortitude to carry on and do our patriotic duty as generations have done before.

Thousands of our forefathers sacrificed on foreign battlefields defending our freedoms, our homeland, and our way of life. Thousands of our foremothers sacrificed pots and pans and farm equipment to be melted down for the war effort during World War Two.

We had ration cards to save food for the troops. We banned men's suits from including cuffs and restricted the length of shirts to save fabric.

Everyday citizens became heroes. Ordinary men and women became G.I. Joes and Rosie the Riveters, everyone working together and doing their part.

We scraped and toiled and persevered, and we won.

That is the spirit we need right now.

This generation has been called upon to make our own sacrifice -- to temporarily sacrifice our way of life so that we may save *human* life.

And I know that we can rise to the challenge once again.

A number of communities across the world, including some right here in Colorado, have taken up a new tradition of going outside for a moment at 8:00 p.m. to applaud and cheer our brave health care workers who are putting their own health and safety on the line to keep us safe, and everyone else who is helping us through this crisis: first responders, farmers and ranchers, journalists, custodial workers, grocery store workers, delivery personnel, truckers, and so many more. I want to encourage Coloradans to participate in this new tradition this evening and every evening that this crisis is with us.

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Our appreciation for those putting themselves at risk unites us across the globe. The only way we're going to get through this is by working together -- as a state, as a nation, and a world. Both China and Taiwan are donating masks and protective equipment to Colorado. Israel even delivered masks to Palestinians.

And let's also cheer on our very own scientists at Colorado State University, who are racing around the clock for a vaccine or cure. And when we achieve that cure or vaccine, and I say when -- not if, whether it comes out of Germany, South Korea, Japan or Fort Collins, it will be shared around the world to end this crisis and save lives.

I might not agree with Henry Kissinger on much, but I found his recent words in the Wall Street Journal very profound:

He said, "The pandemic has prompted an anachronism, a revival of the walled city in an age when prosperity depends on global trade and movement of people."

Colorado, and America, is not a walled city.

We will survive this, and return to health and prosperity by embracing the world rather than shrinking from it.

And through this crisis, we will reaffirm our identity: as innovative, resilient, good-hearted people who care for each other.

St. Francis of Assisi once said "All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."

In these dark times, we all have a light to shine. And that light is the goodness within all of us.

We see that light in the young man who picks up groceries and medicine for an elderly neighbor so they don't have to go out to the store and risk contracting the virus.

We see that light in the small business owner keeping her employees on payroll because it's the fair and decent and right thing to do.

We see that light in the parents who do their best to explain these difficult times to their children, and making sure they know the truth of that wisdom: that a single candle is enough to light the dark.

And we see that light in the teams of doctors and researchers and scientists, spending week after week in labs all over the globe, burning the midnight oil, searching for the cure to save the world.

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We need everyone to do their part.

We need everyone to show that light.

And if we do, as I know we will, we will find our way out of this darkness, and into the light of a brilliant new day.

Thank you. God bless the great state of Colorado. And God Bless the United States of America