



# Press Release

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## **Decision to replace face covering requirement with face covering request did not come lightly**

JONESBOROUGH -- After careful consideration, the Mayors of Carter, Unicoi and Washington counties will lift current face covering requirements at 11:59 p.m. Friday, Feb. 19, 2021.

Businesses are requested to require face coverings be worn in compliance with the Tennessee Pledge, and the lack of an order by any of the County Mayors does not impact any safety measures currently in place in any of the county's school systems, colleges or universities. Tennessee Supreme Court's orders will continue to apply to wearing of face coverings in buildings where court is conducted.

"We appreciate everyone supporting the wearing of face coverings for the past several months to slow the spread of COVID-19," said Washington County Mayor Joe Grandy. "Vaccinations are in full swing, community spread appears to be slowing and your County Mayors agree that the time has come shift from a requirement to a request."

While the County Mayors have decided to repeal their mandates, it's not a complete return to business as usual.

"We do request that businesses continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and Tennessee Pledge recommendations and continue the personal precautions while in public spaces," Grandy said. "We are not out of the pandemic yet, and we need to continue to be mindful of others and follow the guidelines."

The CDC is still advising rigorous and increased compliance with public health mitigation strategies, such as vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene and using both isolation and quarantine to limit the spread of the virus and its variants. Public health officials encourage vaccination as it is an important step to deter the spread of variants.

"We can and are optimistic about the end of the pandemic, but we don't know if we will see spikes and waves due to the variants," Grandy said. "Again, vaccination, physical distancing, staying home if you're sick and wearing a mask if you're in a situation where

you cannot keep your distance from others are all still important things to do to protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

Decisions made by individuals have an impact on others with whom they come in contact, so as the numbers escalated the face covering requirement proved necessary. Our week to week growth rate in the region, and the country, has significantly slowed. We are vaccinating at a steady rate and therefore the County Mayors think the time has come to repeal the mask requirements.

The County Mayors hope to strike a balance between public health objectives and the ability of individuals to make personal decisions for themselves and their families.

To view vaccination information, CDC requirements and local executive orders regarding face coverings, please visit [washingtoncountyttn.org](http://washingtoncountyttn.org) and click on COVID-19.