

July 30, 2020

PRESS RELEASE

Today is Thursday, July 30th and this is a 9:00 update. I sit down a couple times a week gathering my thoughts and writing notes on the Covid-19 updates for Roane County.

I have drafted on two separate occasions, July 15th and July 25th updates, which would require a face covering/mask countywide mandate. I have yet to pull the trigger, so to speak. I struggle with this decision, not because I think people may think it's a freedom violation, not because it is a political statement, or not because I'm afraid that it would eventually cost me my position.

I struggle with the decision because I do not want to further divide our citizens. I do not want to further cause confrontation within places of business. I do not want to further tax our law enforcement.

I do not want to have a mandate that would not or could not be enforceable. There is an old saying, "you cannot legislate morality." You cannot legislate facial covering/mask without experiencing the risk of confrontation in our businesses. Are we asking our city and county officers to write a citation? Who will enforce the mandate? It easily could be citizen against citizen calling each other out. So, all who want me to issue the order, be mad at me, not your neighbor. Call me out, not your neighbor.

We have a lot of passionate people in Roane County. I receive calls, and I read on Facebook that people believe just because there is a mandate people will follow the rules, some may, some will also see it as a confrontation opportunity. The responsible individuals will be responsible. Some say that a mandate shows how important wearing a mask is. Let me say it, "It's important to wear a mask." Is that not enough? All an individual has to say is "I cannot breathe" and they do not have to wear a mask. What does a mandate change? It divides us. It allows confrontation.

The Tennessee Supreme Court has issued an order that all courts proceeding and court rooms provide protection and require masks. I have mandated masks in the Courthouse, but with the Supreme Court mandate and my mandate, one would think 100% facial coverage is in the court room. Not always. Why? Because someone said "I can't breathe."

The mask mandate is still on the table. I have contacted our City Mayors two (2) times to prepare them to be ready. I think the division between citizens is currently a greater risk than the impact of the virus. In the meantime, do not hate each other. Wear a mask out of love, not because of a mandate.

As of yesterday, July 29th, our numbers are 294 positives with 169 active cases. 124 have recovered. We are still getting data from two (2) different labs. We've got some lag data coming in from the first of July as well as the data coming from the new lab used from the Health Department. We are getting double coverage right now. We still anticipate the numbers to go up. I have struggled with a countywide mandate, but I'm just afraid it will divide our community even more and that is a great risk.

God bless Roane County, our State, and our Nation.

RW/ba
C:media

