

KS's Kelly vetoes bill, leaves virus decisions to counties

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly has vetoed a sweeping coronavirus bill that would have given the GOP-controlled Kansas Legislature control over the state's pandemic response.

The Legislature approved the bill early Friday to limit Kelly's emergency powers, including decisions on spending \$1.25 billion in federal relief funds. Kelly vetoed the bill Tuesday. The bill also would have shielded businesses and health care providers from coronavirus-related lawsuits.

Kelly also said she is issuing a new emergency declaration "tailored to the current situation the state is in," and calling the legislature back into session for an emergency session on June 3.

Kelly said she is removing the statewide order that moved the state from one phase to another. Instead, she said she is making it a recommendation and leaving it up to individual counties to decide how to proceed. Kelly said "allowing each county to set guidelines is confusing, but a direct result of the legislature's actions."

Senate President Susan Wagle (District 30-Republican), issued a statement following the announcement of Kelly's decisions:

“Despite her derogatory politically motivated statements about the legislature, along with few down right inaccuracies, I’m very thankful she’s conceded to our position. She sent authority back to the counties. We’ve been saying it all along; one size doesn’t fit all and today locals won that right. It is, however, a shame the Governor spent more than half her time at the podium today insulting her legislative partners who represent the people, rather than explaining specifically what this new order will mean for people’s daily lives and businesses. Kansans crave stability and clear guidance. I hope this Governor has learned Kansans will keep pushing until their voices are heard.”

Associated Press