

STATE OF ARKANSAS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME - GREETINGS:

WHEREAS: An extraordinary occasion has arisen making it necessary to convene the 93rd General Assembly into extraordinary session; and

WHEREAS: The Delta variant of COVID-19 has infected thousands of Arkansans in recent months. This variant has infected a higher rate of school-aged children, and it is more contagious than previous variants of the virus; and

WHEREAS: A COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available for children under the age of twelve (12) years old; and

WHEREAS: Arkansas public schools will begin in-person instruction in August, and the safety of children attending school is critical; and

WHEREAS: All efforts should be made to preserve the safety of these children while maintaining the ability for them to attend in-person instruction; and

WHEREAS: School boards need the flexibility to require masks in congregate settings to protect the safety of children; and

WHEREAS: Act 1002 of 2021 prohibits public school boards from utilizing masks to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; therefore, there is an urgent need to enact exceptions to Act 1002 of 2021, so that public school boards have the flexibility necessary to utilize masks to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools; and

WHEREAS: A full economic recovery from the impact of COVID-19 requires a robust workforce; and

WHEREAS: As a result of extraordinary federal unemployment benefit programs and relief programs, Arkansas employers are unable to fill thousands of job vacancies in the state; and

WHEREAS: The unemployment rate in Arkansas is currently below the national unemployment rate and consistent with the historical unemployment level preceding the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, there is no longer a need within the State of Arkansas for the extraordinary federal unemployment benefit programs provided for under Title IX, Subtitle A, Part 1 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

NOW THEREFORE, I, ASA HUTCHINSON, Governor of the State of Arkansas, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by Article 6, Section 19 of the Arkansas Constitution, do hereby call an Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly to convene in Little Rock on August 4, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., and I do hereby specify that the General Assembly is convened in such Session to consider, and, if so advised, enact laws for the following purposes:

1. To allow public school boards and open enrollment charter schools to implement masking protocols to protect children under the age of twelve (12) in a school building, school bus, or other congregate educational setting during times dedicated for academic purposes;
2. To affirm the decision of the Director of Workforce Services to terminate the State of Arkansas's participation in extraordinary federal unemployment benefit programs related to COVID-19;

3. To affirm that the reduction and prevention of unemployment in Arkansas takes precedence over the receipt of any federal programs related to unemployment, and the Director of Workforce Services may exercise discretion in the decision to participate or cease participation in any voluntary, optional, special or emergency program benefits offered by the federal government to address exceptional unemployment conditions;
4. To confirm gubernatorial appointees as required by Ark. Code Ann. § 10-2-113; and
5. To provide for the payment of expenses and per diem of the House of Representatives and the Senate for this Extraordinary Session.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 2nd day of August, in the year of our Lord 2021.



Asa Hutchinson, Governor

Attest:

John Thurston, Secretary Of State