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Iowa airports drop mask requirements following federal court decision

An appeal could cause displeasure, 'confusion' for passengers, airport administrators say

BY: **KATIE AKIN** - APRIL 20, 2022 5:12 PM



Iowa airports have lifted their mask mandates after a federal judge struck down a CDC requirement. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

All eight of Iowa's commercial airports are no longer requiring passengers to wear face

coverings after a federal judge [overturned a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mandate](#).

A federal judge in Florida ruled Monday that the CDC had acted beyond its authority by requiring masks on public transportation, including airplanes. Following the decision, major airlines [immediately dropped their mandates](#). The Transportation Security Administration announced it would no longer require masks to be worn at public transportation hubs, including airport terminals.

Representatives from Iowa's commercial airports said the change was well-received. Keith Kaspari, director of aviation at the Waterloo Regional Airport, said he spoke to passengers Tuesday who were "relieved at the relaxing of the mask mandate."

"(W)e have transitioned to masks being voluntary for all passengers in addition to meeters or greeters," Kaspari wrote in an email to the Iowa Capital Dispatch. "We have no problem with folks wearing masks, but the previous mask mandate will not be enforced."



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At Des Moines International, deputy communications director Kayla Kovarna said it was "business as usual" after the mandate lifted.

"The Airport Authority moved swiftly to update our website and remove mandatory mask signage along with overhead announcements," Kovarna wrote in an email. "...We are excited to continue welcoming back passengers who are returning to the skies whether they are traveling for business or pleasure."

The CDC [advises individuals to wear masks indoors](#) when there is a "high" rate of COVID-19 transmission locally. High-risk people are advised to also wear a mask in areas of "medium" transmission. All but three of Iowa's counties have a "low" transmission rate, according to the CDC, but the [number of weekly cases has increased in recent weeks](#).

The Biden administration said it [will challenge the judge's ruling](#) after the CDC determined Wednesday that masks are still necessary on public transportation.

Representatives from Iowa airports said they would follow federal guidelines if a mask mandate were put back into place, but they acknowledged the transition back to masking might be tricky.

"I suspect that our passengers would – like airline passengers all over Iowa and most likely throughout the U.S., would not be happy, yet would understand," Kaspari wrote.

Read more: [Iowa COVID infection rate continues slow rise](#)

Pam Hinman, communications director for the Eastern Iowa Airport, said the mask mandate had not created “any major issues” with passengers, but she said changing the rules could have its own complications.

“What can be challenging is confusion for people when new rules are created or reinstated,” Hinman said.

Iowa Republicans celebrate the end of the transportation mask mandate

Republican members of Iowa’s D.C. delegation praised the end of transportation mask mandates.

“Let’s end these mandates once and for all,” Sen. Joni Ernst tweeted Tuesday.

Joni Ernst  
@joniernst

 Freedom prevails 

Iowans & all Americans will no longer be forced to wear a mask on public transportation.



Let’s end these mandates once and for all.

11:38 AM · Apr 19, 2022 


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Sen. Chuck Grassley pointed to a March resolution to end mask mandates on public transportation. The resolution passed, but realistically had little political power, as Biden [promised to veto the measure if it made it to his desk](#).

ChuckGrassley  
@ChuckGrassley

In March I voted to end Pres Biden’s mask mandate on airplanes & transit & ride shares It passed Senate w bipartisan support 57 to 40 Glad 2day fed court struck down mask mandate Enough is enough time 2 end heavy-handed Covid mandates

4:30 PM · Apr 18, 2022 

 1K  See the latest COVID-19 information on Twitter

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Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks retweeted several tweets calling for the unmasking of children.

Some Iowa schools may impose mask mandates [under a January appeals court decision](#), if masks would be necessary to comply with federal disabilities laws. According to the Iowa State Education Association, all Iowa schools are currently mask-optional.

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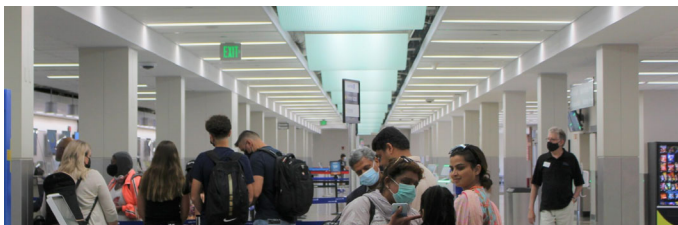


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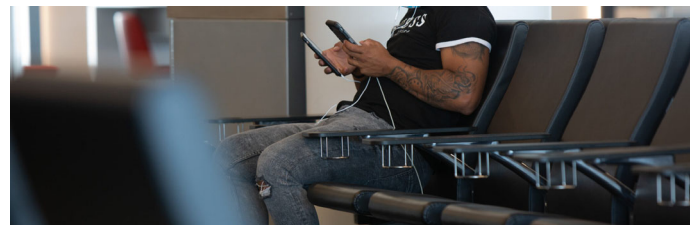
Reporter Katie Akin began her career as an intern at PolitiFact, debunking viral fake news and fact-checking state and national politicians. She moved to Iowa in 2019 for a politics internship at the Des Moines Register, where she assisted with Iowa Caucus coverage, multimedia projects and the Register's Iowa Poll. She became the Register's retail reporter in early 2020, chronicling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Central Iowa's restaurants and retailers.

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