

TIME

CORONAVIRUS BRIEF YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED WEARING MASKS MEAT SHORTAGES NEWSLETTER

Virginia Governor Criticized for Not Wearing Mask at Beach After Urging Citizens to Cover Their Faces



In this Saturday, May 23, 2020, photo, Gov. Ralph Northam and Tori Bloxom, of Onancock, Va., take a selfie as the governor visits the Oceanfront in Virginia Beach, Va., to see for himself how crowded the beach was. Northam has repeatedly urged Virginia residents to cover their faces in public during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Democrat didn't heed his own plea when he posed mask-less for photographs alongside residents during the weekend beach visit. A spokeswoman for the governor's office said on Sunday that Northam should have brought a face mask with him during his visit on Saturday to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. Stephen M. Katz—The Virginian-Pilot/AP

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

MAY 24, 2020 9:41 PM EDT

(VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.) — Gov. Ralph Northam has repeatedly urged Virginia residents to cover their faces in public during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Democrat didn't heed his own plea when he posed mask-less for photographs alongside residents during a weekend beach visit.

A spokeswoman for the governor's office said Sunday that Northam should have brought a face mask with him during his visit on Saturday to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront, news outlets reported.

“He was outside yesterday and not expecting to be within six feet of anyone,” Northam spokesman Alena Yarmosky said in a statement. “This is an important reminder to always have face coverings in case situations change — we are all learning how to operate in this new normal, and it's important to be prepared.”

Northam has suggested that he will announce a statewide policy on face coverings on Tuesday. At the beach on Saturday, the governor told reporters that his administration was still working on the details.

“Wearing a mask could literally save someone else's life,” he said last week, [according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch](#).

Critics on social media chided Northam, a physician, for not practicing what he has preached.

“Physician, heal thyself,” tweeted Todd Gilbert, a Republican who is Virginia's House Minority Leader.

The [Virginian-Pilot reported](#) that Northam posed for a selfie with a woman who said she knows the governor. She gave him a pat on the shoulder.

“We just have to continue to remind people that we want to keep the social distance of 6 feet apart,” he said, when asked about the touch later. “That's a challenge for a lot of folks because they're just not used to doing that.”

Virginia has more than 34,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 1,135 confirmed deaths as of Sunday, according to the state health department.

MOST POPULAR ON TIME

- 1** [How Did Japan Beat Coronavirus Without Lockdowns or Testing?](#)
- 2** [Brazil Is Starting to Lose the Fight Against Coronavirus—and Its President Is Looking the Other Way](#)
- 3** [What We Know About the Effects of COVID-19 on the Body](#)

CONTACT US AT EDITORS@TIME.COM.

TIME