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# Separate federal lawsuits filed against two Northshore hospitals

Myra Gill's attorney calls it a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Gill communicates through professional sign language interpreter Laura

# Sicignano.

Updated: 6:35 PM CDT May 25, 2017

Infinite Scroll Enabled



**Heath Allen**  

Reporter

**SLIDELL, La.** — A deaf woman has filed a federal lawsuit against Slidell Memorial Hospital, claiming that she was denied a sign language interpreter when she was taken to the emergency room last year.

Myra Gill's attorney calls it a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Gill communicates through professional sign language interpreter Laura Sicignano.

"There were no interpreters there, and that's not OK," Gill said. "My daughter-in-law was there and she had to stay the whole time."

Gill's family took her to the emergency room at Slidell Memorial Hospital last summer. She was suffering intense stomach pain, but she was having difficulty telling the medical staff what was wrong.

"My family was in a panic," she said.

Gill's attorney, Andrew Bizer, said despite repeated requests by Gill and her family for a sign language interpreter, none were provided.

"We know that you can't get an interpreter at the drop of a hat within 10 minutes," Bizer said, "But Ms. Gill was in the hospital for three days and never once received a sign language interpreter."

Gill's daughter-in-law stayed with her and said she did her best to interpret.

"I mean, I camped out," Jennifer Gill said. "And the nurses had told me, you know, 'You can't leave. We've got to have you to talk to her.'"

Gill ultimately had her gall bladder removed.

"It was awful. I was in terrible pain. I couldn't even communicate and it just was crazy. I was just overwhelmed," Gill said.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act and the Affordable Care Act clearly state that hospitals must provide American Sign Language interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing," Bizer said. "It's on the health care provider to pay for and arrange for the interpreter. It's not about having your daughter-in-law who signs to do it for you."

When the hospital was contacted about the lawsuit, officials responded with a written statement from Sam Caruso Jr., the hospital's director of business development saying:

"We regret when any patient feels as if the service we provided was not up to the highest of standards. SMH acknowledges that this is ongoing litigation, and as such, we cannot comment.

"We are investigating this matter further as this is the first notice of any complaint by this patient. We believe we have done everything we could to serve this patient appropriately and in accordance with all legal requirements. We do have policies in place to address all ADA compliance regulations, and we always follow those policies.

"We are proud of our efforts to make healthcare in our community accessible and affordable for all, and we will continue to strive to meet the health care needs of every member of our community."

In a separate legal action, Bizer said he filed a similar lawsuit against North Oaks Hospital in Hammond on behalf of Rebecca Varnado, a deaf woman who was a patient there. Bizer said she, too, made repeated requests for interpreters, but none were provided.

North Oaks Hospital responded with a statement from public relations coordinator Melanie Lanaux Zaffuto: "To date we have not been served with the referenced lawsuit. However, if and when we are served, we will follow our policy which is to not comment on pending litigation."

In addition to unspecified monetary compensation, Bizer said he hopes the cases will spread a clear message to the hospitals of Louisiana that "illegal discrimination of any kind against deaf individuals is unacceptable."

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## Clarified: Who is U.S. Congresswoman Patsy Takemoto Mink?

Meet the first woman of color to serve in Congress, responsible for landmark legislation.

Updated: 8:35 AM CDT May 12, 2022

### Courtenay Tucker

*Project CommUNITY is an ongoing initiative across Hearst Television to put a spotlight on diverse voices in our communities. The initiative is built around regular coverage of people who are working to make a difference and stories detailing the history of the battle for Civil Rights, inclusion and social change across America.*

U.S. Congresswoman Patsy Takemoto Mink was the first woman of color to serve in Congress when she was elected in 1964 representing Hawaii.

She was born in what was then the Territory of Hawaii in 1927. She went on to study law at the University of Chicago and after starting her own practice, returned to Hawaii and began her career in politics.

Mink was the first woman to serve in Hawaii's territorial house and senate, from 1956 and 1958, and 1958 to 1959 respectively.

After Hawaii became a state in 1959, Mink ran for U.S. Congress and won her 1964 campaign, joining the 89th congress in 1965.

Over her next five decades in politics, Congresswoman Mink helped create landmark legislation, like the first childcare bill and Title IX.

After losing her re-election bid in 1976, Mink left congress for a time but returned in 1990, where she served until her death in 2002.

Title IX was renamed the Patsy Takemoto Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act in her honor.

U.S. Representative Janice Schakowsky, who is featured in this piece as well, honored Mink's life in 2021 in the House of Representatives during Women's History Month.

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This video is the first of a four-part series by *Clarified* featured during

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Month to educate viewers on the contributions, experiences and heroes of the Asian American community.

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## The best grill sales happening this Memorial Day

If you're wondering if now is a good time to buy a grill, it is!

Updated: 3:00 AM CDT May 12, 2022

### Heath Owens

Everyone knows that [Memorial Day is a great time to buy big-ticket appliances](#), and the same great deals tend to apply to grills. If it's any indication, we aren't even a week into the month and there are already so many early Memorial Day grill sales underway. Whether you're looking for a [standard gas grill](#), a [charcoal grill](#), a portable electric grill (this type can often be used indoors, too), a [wood pellet grill](#), a flat top grill, or even a griddle, a [smoker](#) or a [pizza oven](#), there are serious deals to be had on any grill or grill-adjacent piece of outdoor cooking equipment right now — just in time for summer.

Below, we've rounded up some of the best deals on grills that you can shop now if you want to get in the action ahead of MDW. And beyond that, all the best early Memorial Day grill sales the internet has to offer.

Shop these best Memorial Day grill sales and deals to level up your backyard entertaining space in a major way and save some cash while you're at it. Now that's how you kick off summer!

*Can't see the products? Click here for the best viewing experience!*

## The Best Early Memorial Day Grill Deals to Shop Now

### Memorial Day Grill Sales

**20% OFF**

#### Spirit® Weber 3-Burner Gas Grill

SHOP NOW

wayfair.com

~~\$789.00~~  
**\$639.00**



**15% OFF**

#### Blue Rhino 4-Burner Flat Top Grill

SHOP NOW

lowes.com

**\$399.99**



**10% OFF**

#### Traeger Pro 780 Pellet Grill and Smoker

SHOP NOW

homedepot.com

**\$999.99**



**40% OFF**

#### Outback Portable Charcoal Grill



### Outsunny Portable Charcoal Grill

SHOP NOW

walmart.com

**\$199.99**



22% OFF

### Kamado Joe 20" Kamado Charcoal Grill

SHOP NOW

wayfair.com

~~\$639.99~~

**\$499.99**



33% OFF

### Masterbuilt Digital Electric Smoker

SHOP NOW

wayfair.com

~~\$299.99~~

**\$234.38**



22% OFF

### Stainless Steel Wood-Fired Pizza Oven

SHOP NOW

wayfair.com

~~\$349.99~~

**\$229.05**



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## Char-Broil 4-Burner Gas Grill

SHOP NOW

amazon.com

~~\$369.99~~

**\$256.84**



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## Early Memorial Day Grill Sales

### Amazon

- Take up to **40% off** George Foreman [indoor grills](#)
- Take up to **36% off** select [Char-Broil grills](#)
- Take up to **30% off** select [Cuisinart indoor and outdoor grills](#)
- Take up to **30% off** select [Coleman grills and outdoor cookers](#)
- Take up to **20% off** select [Weber grills](#)
- Take up to **15% off** select [Kenmore grills](#)
- Take up to **11% off** select [Traeger wood pellet grills](#)

### Home Depot

- Save on select [Nexgrill gas grills](#), including their [4-burner stainless steel propane gas grill](#), which is **\$50 off**
- Save on Traeger wood pellet grills and smokers: take **\$100 off** the [best-selling Traeger Pro 780 grill and smoker](#) and take **\$150 off** the extra-large [Traeger Ironwood 885 grill and smoker](#)
- Take **26% off** this [outdoor griddle stove](#)
- Plus, get free delivery on all grill purchases of **\$399** or more.

## Lowe's

- Take up to **40% off** select [flat top grills](#)
- Take up to **20% off** select [gas grills](#)
- Take up to **20% off** select [charcoal grills](#)
- Take **20% off** the [Masterbuilt 354 sq. in. Electric Smoker](#)

## Wayfair

- Take up to **40% off** select [portable electric grills](#)
- Take up to **35% off** select [Kamado grills](#)
- Take up to **34% off** select [gas grills](#)
- Take up to **33% off** select [smokers](#)
- Take up to **30% off** select [wood pellet grills](#)
- Take up to **25% off** select [outdoor pizza ovens](#)
- Take up to **22% off** select [charcoal grills](#)

## Walmart

- Save up to **\$200 off** select [gas grills](#), including:
  - Save **\$190 off** the [Grill Boss 3-Burner Gas Grill](#)
  - Save **\$50 off** the [Cuisinart 4-Burner Dual Fuel Gas Grill](#) in both the [stainless steel](#) or [red](#) colorway
- Save up to **\$150 off** select [charcoal grills](#), including:
  - Save **\$150 off** the [Outsunny Portable Charcoal Grill Trolley](#)
  - Save **\$22 off** the [American Gourmet by Char-Broil Barrel Grill](#)
  - Save **\$20 off** the [Expert Grill Heavy Duty Charcoal Grill](#)

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## TIMELINE: A look back at another year of the coronavirus in Louisiana

Updated: 1:46 PM CST Mar 9, 2022

**WDSU Digital Team**

Two years ago today, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Louisiana. Shortly after, the state saw its first surge largely linked to Mardi Gras. Since then, the state has seen five surges, reported more than 1.2 million cases and more than 18,000 deaths. Below is a timeline of when coronavirus entered the state, and the light at the end of the tunnel with vaccinations.

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## 1 March 9, 2020: First COVID-19 case confirmed in Louisiana

[The first case of COVID-19 reported in Louisiana was a Jefferson Parish resident.](#)

The infected person was admitted to the Veterans Affairs hospital on March 6 with pneumonia-like symptoms, and it became more severe. That's when health officials went forward with testing and on March 9 determined it was a presumptive positive COVID-19 case.

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## 2 March 13, 2020: All Louisiana Schools Closed

[As part of the stay-at-home order, Gov. John Bel Edwards also closed all schools through April.](#) However, as COVID-19 continued to surge schools never got a chance to reopen before its scheduled summer break.

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## 3 March 14, 2020: Louisiana confirms first COVID-19 death.

The Orleans Parish resident was a 58-year-old with underlying health conditions, according to the Louisiana Department of Health.

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## 4 March 23, 2020: Louisiana Stay-At-Home order in place

Gov. John Bel Edward's issued a stay-at-home order for all non-essential workers on March 23, 2020. The governor said the order to shutter businesses was an effort to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. He said the goal was to eliminate opportunities where employers or public spaces may have too many people in one space.

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## 5 April 11, 2020: One of state's first COVID-19 patients released from hospital

As Louisiana was reporting its highest death count of the pandemic in mid-April, there were also stories of those beating the virus. [Carmen Demolle, 93, of New Orleans, was one of the first patients in the most vulnerable age group to be released from the hospital.](#)

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## 6 May 15, 2020: Louisiana enters into phase one reopening plan

In April 2020, Gov. Edwards announced that Louisiana was not ready to move into phase one reopening. [The stay-at-home order officially ended May 15, which was when the state moved into phase one reopening.](#)

Businesses that were allowed to open were limited to one-quarter of their previous capacity, and employees working around customers will have to wear masks.

## 7 May 16, 2020: New Orleans phase one reopening plan goes into effect

The city of New Orleans charted its own path early on in the pandemic. New Orleans Health Director Jennifer Avegno and New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell were thrust into the spotlight and heavily scrutinized for their more conservative approach to reopening businesses and schools. [It often was more strict than the state guidance throughout the entire pandemic.](#)

---

## 8 July 11, 2020: Louisiana mask mandate issued

[On July 11, Gov. John Bel Edwards put into place his statewide mask mandate.](#) The mandate was issued at the beginning of the second wave of COVID-19 cases. This caused a rift in the legislature, which ultimately led to a lawsuit over COVID-19 restrictions after [House Republicans challenged the mandate](#), causing confusion. A judge ruled that, due to the public health crisis, the challenge wasn't constitutional and the virus restrictions would remain in place.

## 9 Mid-July 2020: Louisiana enters second wave of COVID-19

After Labor Day, Louisiana saw its second wave of COVID-19 case spikes and deaths. By July 28, Louisiana led the nation in COVID-19 cases per-capita. Edwards pleaded with residents to follow restrictions, warning that hospitals statewide were overwhelmed with patients.

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## 10 Sept. 8, 2020: Most New Orleans area schools reopen to in-person learning

Leading into the school year, Louisiana was in the throws of the second wave of COVID-19 cases, [which caused concern among teachers and parents](#). Many school districts scrambled to create plans for in-person and online learning to accommodate all families.

[By Labor Day, nearly all Southeast Louisiana schools were back in session with some type of in-person learning.](#)

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## 11 November 2020: Louisiana enters third and most deadly wave of COVID-19

Ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, signs of Louisiana's third wave emerged. Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a special address ahead of the holidays begging residents to not gather. By January, Louisiana saw its deadliest wave of COVID-19. [Dr. Joseph Kanter with the Louisiana Department of Health said there had never been more COVID-19 in the state than in that moment on Jan. 13th due to holiday gatherings.](#)

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## 12 Dec 14, 2020: A sign of hope as first vaccine administered in Louisiana

A sign of hope came in the form of a COVID-19 vaccine at Ochsner Medical Center. Louisiana was in its deadliest surge of cases, and hospitals were overwhelmed. [Medical personnel were among the first to get the vaccine, and emotions were high as doctors and nurses rolled up their sleeves for their Pfizer shots.](#)

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### **13 Dec. 31, 2020: 100 Louisiana pharmacies receive COVID-19 vaccines**

Shortly after Louisiana began vaccinating front-line workers, the state received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines for vulnerable people age 70 and older. A total of 100 pharmacies statewide received the vaccine to administer to priority groups.

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### **14 Jan 8, 2021: Second-deadliest day of pandemic in Louisiana**

[Louisiana saw its second deadliest day following the holiday COVID-19 spike. According to LDH, a total of 105 people died from the virus across the state in one day.](#)

The highest death count reported in the state since the pandemic began was 129 deaths in a day back in April 2020.

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## **15 Jan. 16, 2021: First COVID-19 variant confirmed in Louisiana.**

[The Louisiana Department of Health confirmed the state's first identified case of the COVID-19 variant](#), SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7., frequently referred to as "the U.K. variant" because it is prevalent in the United Kingdom, in an individual in the Greater New Orleans area. Since then, 18 more cases of the variant have been confirmed with more than 50 remaining to be confirmed through the CDC. Louisiana still has yet to confirm a case of the Brazilian or South African variant.

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## **March 1, 2021: Major Milestone: Louisiana vaccinates 16 million people**

On March 1, 2021, Louisiana reached a major milestone by surpassing 1 million COVID-19 vaccinations statewide.

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## **17 March 3, 2021: Louisiana announces first of many mass vaccination events**

Shortly after the Johnson & Johnson one-dose vaccine became available to the state, Louisiana announced and held its first series of mass vaccination events. One of the first mass vaccination events in the state was held at the Morial Convention Center in New Orleans.

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## **18 March 8, 2021: Louisiana nears record-low for hospitalizations**

Hospitalizations in Louisiana related to COVID-19 are on pace to reach their lowest mark since the start of the pandemic a year ago. A record-low 518 patients were reported on Oct. 3. Numbers for March 8 from the Louisiana Department of Health showed 534 people at inpatient facilities.

## **19 June 28, 2021: First case of delta variant reported in Louisiana**

The Precision Medicine Lab at LSU Health New Orleans School of Medicine reported the first delta variant case in Region 1 of Louisiana, which includes the New Orleans metropolitan area.

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## **20 Jul 23, 2021: Governor urges vaccinations amid Delta surge**

Gov. John Bel Edwards announced that Louisiana had the highest number of COVID-19 cases per capita in the U.S. on July 23, 2021. He urged residents to get vaccinated.

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## 21 Aug 2, 2021: Indoor mask mandate reinstated

Gov. John Bel Edwards reinstated the mask mandate amid the delta variant surge.

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## 22 Aug 3, 2021: Children become ill with delta variant

New Orleans officials issued a strong warning to residents after the delta variant claimed the lives of several children across the state.

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## 23 Aug 5, 2021: Schools return to in-person learning

Despite the deadly surge of the delta variant, schools in the New Orleans area returned to in-person learning after Summer break.

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## **24 Aug 6, 2021: Governor asks federal government for help for hospitals**

Edwards asked the federal government for medical strike teams to help the state respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said even with the medical strike teams, due to the increase in patients and nursing shortage that the resources still weren't be enough to respond to the surge.

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## **25 Aug 20, 2021: Push for monoclonal antibody treatments**

Louisiana began working to make monoclonal antibody treatments more accessible in the state. Edwards said 176 providers were offering the treatment statewide during the

delta surge.

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## **26** Sept 28, 2021: Louisiana seeing 'alarming increase' in severe pregnancy outcomes amid COVID-19 delta surge

The Louisiana Department of Health is reporting an alarming statistic involving pregnancy during the coronavirus delta variant surge.

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## **27** Oct. 4, 2021: 9 children die from Delta surge

The Louisiana Department of Health confirmed 9 pediatric COVID-19 deaths during the delta variant surge.

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## **28 Nov. 3, 2021: Louisiana children 5 and up eligible for COVID-19 vaccine**

Louisiana children became eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine during the height of the delta surge.

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## **29 Nov 17, 2021: Boosters recommended**

Louisiana residents were urged to get booster shots before the winter months.

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## **30 Dec 6, 2021: Omicron case reported in New Orleans**

Louisiana Department of Health reported its first probable case of the omicron variant in Louisiana. The case involved a person in the Greater New Orleans area who recently traveled within the United States.

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## **31 December 2021: Mardi Gras concerns**

Carnival krewes scrambled to receive information about whether parades would roll for Mardi Gras after the omicron surge happened. Mayor LaToya Cantrell announced that parades would roll, and instated an indoor mask mandate and proof of vaccination rule to ensure safety during Carnival season.

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## **32 Jan. 1, 2022: Post-holiday surge of omicron**

Louisiana broke COVID-19 single day case count records nearly daily after the Christmas holidays.

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### **33 Jan. 1, 2022: Required vaccines for children in New Orleans**

New Orleans officials announced that children in New Orleans will need to be fully vaccinated to go to school or enter public places.

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### **34 Jan. 11, 2021: New Orleans reinstates indoor mask mandate**

Louisiana state officials declined to reinstate an indoor mask mandate statewide during the omicron surge, but New Orleans officials put one in place for Carnival Season.

## 35 Jan 24, 2022: Omicron peaks

Ochsner Health confirmed that the Omicron surge peaked just before Mardi Gras parades.

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## 36 February 2022: 3 additional pediatric deaths reported

Three children died during the omicron surge, according to the LDH. A total of 21 children under 18 years old have died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic in Louisiana, according to the health department.

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## 37 February 16, 2022: Gov. Edwards extends emergency order

Gov. John Bel Edwards extended the COVID-19 emergency order for Louisiana, but did not put in any required mitigations.

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## **38** March 1, 2022: Record-low cases and hospitalizations

Louisiana reported record-low cases of COVID-19 and hospitalizations following a successful Carnival Season in New Orleans. Data from cases collected during Mardi Gras weekend won't be finalized for several weeks.

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## **39** March 3, 2022: New Orleans drops indoor mask mandate

New Orleans Health Department Director Dr. Jennifer Avegno announced that the indoor mask mandate was lifted. The proof of vaccination or PCR test rule will be dropped at the end of March if cases remain low.

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