

ACLU of Wisconsin: Statement regarding Supreme Court decision to overturn Safer-At-Home-order

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MILWAUKEE – The Wisconsin Supreme Court today ruled to overturn Wisconsin’s safer-at-home order.

Chris Ott, executive director of the ACLU of Wisconsin, made the following statement:

“Public health experts have been clear that prematurely lifting social distancing measures will have serious and deadly consequences, especially for vulnerable communities. Today the Wisconsin Supreme Court chose to ignore those warnings, jeopardizing the health of all Wisconsinites and further endangering people of color and members of other vulnerable communities who already faced the greatest risk from this virus.

COVID-19 has laid bare the pervasive racial injustice that permeates every aspect of our society, deepening existing racial disparities and infecting communities of color at terribly disproportionate rates. Given this reality, it was incredibly disheartening to hear remarks made in the courtroom that demeaned and discounted the experiences of those most affected by the pandemic. The assertion that the scores of outbreaks occurring in meatpacking facilities were somehow acceptable because they don’t impact ‘regular folks,’ or the absurd equating of the safer-at-home order with Japanese-American internment, were painful to hear.

“Emergency orders can be necessary during crises like a pandemic, as long as they are grounded in science and consistent with the need to protect the health, safety, and civil liberties of us all. Specifically, Wisconsin’s safer-at-home order has been

instrumental in allowing Wisconsinites to stay home from work and protect themselves from infection. While some will still have the option to work from home and do what's necessary to stay safe, a significant portion of people across the state, particularly people of color and those with low incomes, have now had that protection removed, even as COVID-19 continues to spread.

“Despite today’s ruling, we urge employers not to force people back to work before it is safe to do so or before childcare is available. We also encourage state leaders in the legislative and executive branches to make a serious effort to work together and continue to follow the advice of medical experts and make decisions that prioritize the health of Wisconsin residents and protect those who are most in danger.”