

Bill Kaplan: Trump downplays coronavirus in Midwest

Posted on Monday, Mar 30, 2020

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

Trump said: “Those (California and New York) are really two hotbeds. ...(Y)ou go out to the Midwest ... and they’re watching it on television but they don’t have the same problems.” Facts: there are many thousands of coronavirus cases and a rising death toll in the Midwest. Wisconsin cases doubled in a week to over 1,000.

That is why the CDC sent a team to Wisconsin. The CDC said: “(W)hat we’re seeing in New York City ... right now is a real warning to other areas about what may happen or what may already be starting to happen” And, Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) chief medical officer Ryan Westergaard said: “I would characterize the risk in all Wisconsin counties as high.”

With the national toll above 125,000 coronavirus cases and nearly 2,500 dead, Trump wants the economy “opened up” by Easter: “You’ll have packed churches... .” However, Trump is not relying on data and science. He said: “I just thought it was a beautiful time (Easter) to loosen limits.” Ohio GOP Governor Mike DeWine strongly disagrees: “Protecting people and protecting the economy are not mutually exclusive. The fact is, we can save our economy by first saving lives. And we have to do it in that order.”

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Wisconsin Democratic Governor Tony Evers told the Washington Post: “We had the president one time saying it’s a hoax, then a few weeks later, it’s really, really bad, then let’s shoot for Easter. There is a disconnect, ... it’s confusing to people... . My health care officials and scientists are telling me it’s still a big deal. They’ll make the

decisions based on science.”

Evers is not alone. Over 25 Democratic and GOP governors across the U.S. have issued statewide orders to stay at home. Six Midwest states agree with Evers’ “Safer at Home” policy. Wisconsin GOP legislative leaders had second thoughts about challenging Evers, perhaps after noticing GOP governors in Idaho, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Vermont and West Virginia on the same page as Evers.

Wisconsin DHS Secretary (nominee) Andrea Palm said: “It is certainly safe to assume that there are more ... positive numbers of cases considering the prioritizing we are doing to assure that our frontline health care workers and those in hospitals and long-term care are getting tests.” She thinks Wisconsin could have 1,000 deaths and over 20,000 coronavirus cases shortly if Wisconsinites don’t stay at home. Palm has not been confirmed by the GOP-led Senate, but has risen to the crisis.

Meanwhile, all Wisconsin congressional members supported the \$2 trillion coronavirus spending bill, which includes checks to more than 150 million Americans, loans to small and big businesses, and help for hospitals and modest spending for dairy and other farmers. It’s a start.

The additional health care funding is needed for Wisconsin – but may fall short. One prominent Wisconsin doctor said a coronavirus “tsunami” is coming. Hospitals will become overwhelmed. Circumstances have changed. It’s time to accept federal funding to expand Medicaid. It’s urgent.

- Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 – 2009.