

Committee to Protect Medicare: Wisconsin docs urge Trump to cancel visit, Saturday rallies as COVID-19 cases ravage state

Posted on Thursday, Oct 1, 2020

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MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin physicians today urged President Trump to cancel his visit to the state and scrub two rallies that he has planned for Saturday as the state experiences the worst surge of COVID-19 cases since the deadly pandemic began in February. The physicians' appeal comes as Trump's own COVID-19 task force advises [maximum social distancing](#) in Wisconsin, and [Bellin Health System](#) in Green Bay, which will host one rally, reported its capacity stood at 94 percent.

"President Trump has a responsibility to keep Wisconsin families and Americans safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and holding mass rallies that attract thousands of people while COVID-19 cases go through the roof will put people's health at risk," said Dr. Bob Freedland, MD, and ophthalmologist in La Crosse, and state lead for the Committee to Protect Medicare. "As physicians, we have been urging all Wisconsinites since Day One of the pandemic to exercise safety behaviors such as wearing masks and avoiding crowds. From everything we have seen of President Trump's campaign rallies, where thousands of people stand shoulder to shoulder with the overwhelming majority of them not wearing masks, these events have the potential to become superspreader infection events that Wisconsin doesn't need right now."

Trump plans to hold campaign [rallies](#) in La Crosse and Green Bay on Saturday. Both regions are seeing massive increases in COVID-19 infections. Green Bay and La Crosse are in the [Top 10 areas](#) nationally experiencing the worst COVID-19 outbreaks this week. Green Bay [hospitals](#) are nearing capacity and La Crosse is

reporting more than [2,600 positive COVID-19](#) cases per 100,000 people. Statewide, COVID-19 has [infected](#) more than 126,000 people and killed more than 1,300. [Data](#) indicate that La Crosse and Brown counties, the counties Trump plans to visit Saturday, face imminent COVID-19 outbreaks. Since Sept. 1, Trump has held more than 20 campaign [rallies](#). Health officials blamed Trump's June indoor rally in Tulsa, Okla., for a surge in positive cases in the state. That rally was also linked to the death of former Republican presidential candidate [Herman Cain](#), who attended the event.

"Green Bay and La Crosse are among the hardest hit COVID-19 hotspots not just in Wisconsin, but the nation, and holding rallies in these communities right now would be reckless and irresponsible," said Dr. Ann Helms, MD, MS, a neurologist in Brookfield. "As we saw in his debate with former Vice President Joe Biden on Tuesday night, President Trump will likely use every opportunity between now and Election Day to spread medically inaccurate information that will endanger people's health and safety. Wisconsin needs more tests, more masks and more national leadership, not political stunts that spread misinformation and infections."

At the same time, Trump continues to push for the elimination of the [Affordable Care Act](#), which threatens healthcare for 130 million Americans with preexisting conditions such as diabetes, asthma and heart illnesses, including 2.4 million people in [Wisconsin](#), in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ending the ACA also eliminates the expansion of Medicaid for working low-income families, which state Republicans in Wisconsin have [blocked](#). Last week, Trump named a Supreme Court nominee who has indicated her [opposition](#) to the ACA.

The Wisconsin physicians cited several medically inaccurate and misleading claims that Trump made during his Tuesday debate with Biden:

- Trump repeatedly praised his own efforts at a COVID-19 pandemic response. The [U.S. death toll](#) stood at more than 206,000 on Wednesday — an average of nearly 1,000 deaths per day — with 7.2 million people infected. Trump [knew](#) during the onset of the pandemic in spring that COVID-19 was deadlier than the flu, spread through the air and infected people of all ages, including youth and children. Despite the information, Trump downplayed COVID-19 and likened it to the [flu](#), continues to reject the effectiveness of [mask wearing](#) and is pressuring states to reopen [schools](#).

- Trump falsely claimed his campaign rallies have not led to infections. They [have](#), blamed for a spike of 200 daily new cases after he held his Tulsa rally.
- In the debate, Trump claimed: “We got the gowns, we got the masks.” Eight months after the first U.S. COVID-19 cases were reported, health workers still face a [shortage](#) of masks and may even be using masks that don’t meet [safety standards](#).
- Trump claimed the nation was “weeks away from a vaccine.” Yet his top vaccine official says a vaccine by October or November is highly [unlikely](#). The head of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says a vaccine for mass use will likely be available in [spring 2021](#). During the debate, when confronted with his science experts’ assessment, Trump said they were wrong.
- Trump falsely claimed COVID-19 doesn’t affect children and young people. [Data](#) shows that COVID-19 infects youth and can lead to serious inflammation of critical organs in children. In [Wisconsin](#), an early September outbreak among young people sparked the broader statewide outbreaks that are now infecting older people.
- Trump falsely claimed public health experts rejected masks as a useful protection against COVID-19 person-to-person transmission. As scientific evidence grew that masks play a significant role in reducing [infections](#) and minimizing community [spread](#), public health experts urged [universal](#) mask wearing.
- Trump falsely claimed he banned travel from [China](#), when he only imposed some restrictions, and the ban failed to prevent thousands of travelers from China from entering the United States in the months following the restrictions.