

Committee to Protect Medicare: Wisconsin doctors blast Trump rally today as data links events to COVID-19 deaths, cases keep rising

Posted on Monday, Nov 2, 2020

>> **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.](#)**

KENOSHA, Wis. — Wisconsin physicians criticized President Trump for continuing to hold crowded campaign rallies that increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading into communities that are experiencing more cases of deaths and sickness. Trump scheduled another rally today at 6 p.m. CST in Kenosha. Over the weekend, Stanford University researchers announced [new data](#) linking Trump's rallies to avoidable deaths.

“Physicians across Wisconsin have repeatedly begged President Trump to stop coming to states that are seeing COVID-19 spread like wildfire and to start taking this pandemic seriously,” said Dr. Robert Freedland, MD, Wisconsin State Lead for the Committee to Protect Medicare and ophthalmologist in La Crosse. “As physicians, we see too much suffering and too many people dying from COVID-19. We must always remember and honor them as human beings with loved ones who will grieve for them. When President Trump holds an in-person rally and packs people close together, with few people wearing masks, he is dishonoring the memory of the people we have lost to COVID-19 and he is exposing more families across Wisconsin to this disease.”

Wisconsin now has 1,018 new cases per 100,000, ranking it [third-highest](#) in the nation. Wisconsin's seven-day average of positive cases is near [30 percent](#). Public health experts say communities can reopen when the rate is 5 percent or lower.

Last week, Wisconsin reported a [record-breaking 5,262 cases](#) in a single day

Tuesday and the most deaths in a day, at 64.

Wisconsin's huge spike in cases threatens to overwhelm hospitals, with estimates that hospitals could [run out of ICU beds](#) soon. Several [communities](#) report hospitals are at or [near capacity](#).

“President Trump’s rallies stand out for two reasons: They pack people close together with no masks, and they serve as platforms for him to continue spreading medically inaccurate misinformation — both of which put people’s safety at risk,” said Dr. Madelaine Tully, family physician in Milwaukee. “The more President Trump downplays COVID-19, the more he gives people a false sense of security, when we should all be redoubling our safety behaviors during this surge. With his words and his actions, President Trump is making things worse for Wisconsin families and putting their lives at risk.”

Research released on Friday examined 18 counties that hosted Trump’s rallies between June 20 and September 22. The researchers then compared the rate of post-rally Covid-19 infections in the host counties to that of comparable counties that did not host a rally. The study followed COVID-19 infection rates for 10 post-rally weeks for each event. According to the researchers at Stanford University, the “18 rallies resulted in more than 30,000 incremental confirmed cases of COVID-19.”

The researchers wrote: “Applying county specific post-event death rates, we conclude that the rallies likely led to more than 700 deaths.”

The physicians cautioned the media and the public to be wary of Trump and his administration’s most recent flurry of medically inaccurate misinformation and claims not based on facts.

- In recent days, [physicians](#) and [hospitals](#) have pushed back against Trump’s medically inaccurate misinformation with clear facts. Trump’s false claim that doctors and hospitals are inflating COVID-19 deaths to get more money has been widely [debunked](#) and [criticized](#), and reflects Trump’s misunderstanding of how death certificates, which note underlying causes of deaths, are completed.
- Trump has repeatedly downplayed COVID-19’s devastation by characterizing the pandemic as “[disappearing](#).” As of Thursday, 228,000 Americans have [died](#) of COVID-19 —an average of around 1,000 deaths a day — and 8.9 million

people have been sickened.

- President Trump's chief of staff Mark Meadows [acknowledged](#): "We are not going to control the pandemic." In the Oct. 24 interview, Meadows said the administration's focus was on vaccines and treatment.

"Instead of holding another risky, in-person campaign rally, President Trump should do what he should have done from the start, and that's requiring people to wear masks, implement a stay-at-home order, and ensure health workers have the masks, tests and resources we need to protect people and save lives," said Dr. Freedland. "President Trump has clearly thrown in the towel and is willing to allow COVID-19 to continue devastating Wisconsin families. By continuing to hold campaign rallies in states that have been hardest hit in this pandemic, including Wisconsin, President Trump opens the door to further spread of COVID-19, and more pain and suffering through the winter. And as physicians, we remain deeply concerned that the president still threatens healthcare for millions of Americans even as he exposes them to potential sickness from COVID-19."

President Trump supports a lawsuit to eliminate the Affordable Care Act, which threatens healthcare for more than 2.4 million people in Wisconsin — or two in five people — with a [preexisting condition](#) such as asthma, diabetes, cancer and potentially long-term damage to vital organs from [COVID-19](#).