

Gae Magnifici: See the forest through the trees

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In October 1962, President John F. Kennedy was informed that the Soviet Union was in the process of stationing nuclear missiles off the coast of the United States. The event would come to be known as the Cuban missile crisis, and the closest the world would ever come to all out nuclear war.

After the announcement that the Soviets were positioning nukes capable of striking the United States, Kennedy was faced with a series of options. He could strike Cuba and give the U.S. the upper hand if a nuclear war broke out, or he could refrain from nuclear escalation at the risk of putting the U.S. at a disadvantage in any conflict.

Kennedy saw the forest through the trees. While his military experts unanimously advised him to attack Cuba, Kennedy refrained from direct action because he saw the human suffering that would eventually come from escalating the conflict. He risked an immediate threat to the U.S. because he knew there were consequences his advisors were not adequately weighing.

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Soon, Governor Evers will also need to see the forest through the trees. State health experts have accurately advised him of the dangers of the coronavirus, but it is impossible to quantify the costs of preventative measures. Hundreds of thousands have filed for unemployment in Wisconsin, and each one represents a life, a livelihood, a family that has been upended in a matter of weeks. People who have spent decades building profitable businesses are preparing to file for bankruptcy. The mental health effects of social isolation will not be seen for months or years.

Drastic social distancing has flattened Wisconsin's curve, but each day of isolation has real costs to everyone.

Soon, Governor Evers must return Wisconsin to work. The dignity of work and the prosperity of our economy must be taken into account as he decides his policies. Banning cars would save many lives, but no one has ever seriously recommended doing so. We must accept a certain amount of risk to continue our lives during these times. Social distancing must be integrated into everyday life until we have a vaccine. Restaurants, bars, and retail should be opened again, even if their capacity is limited. Churches should be opened to help our communities cope with this crisis. Parks and golf courses should be opened because state lands held for public use should never be closed. Wisconsin deserves a measured approach to preventing severe outbreaks that can coincide with our daily lives.

We face a once-in-a-generation crisis. To navigate it, and to succeed, we must all see the forest through the trees.

— *Magnafici, R-Dresser, represents the 28th Assembly District.*