

GOP leaders knock Evers' plan to reopen economy, call for regional approach

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Gov. Tony Evers has announced a three-phase plan to reopen Wisconsin businesses once the state gains a greater capacity to fight COVID-19 and sees a downward trajectory in cases over a 14-day period.

But Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, said yesterday the moves add roadblocks to reopening the state's economy. They vowed to continue with their pending lawsuit seeking to overturn the gov's latest stay-at-home order.

Several of the criteria cited in the plan mirror the steps Evers said last week the state would need to meet before dialing back his new stay-at-home order that runs through May 26. That includes a greater testing capacity, more personal protection equipment and more capacity for contact tracing to track those who have been in contact with infected people.

Evers added the downward trajectory in both the number of flu-like illnesses and COVID-19 symptoms reported within a 14-day period as well as the positive tests of those conducted.

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The trend over the past two weeks has been largely flat with occasional downturns or upticks. The number of positive tests dipped to 87 on April 13, but has been between 127 and 170 since.

The plan, which mirrors guidelines from the federal government, comes amid a backlash from businesses and others on extending the stay-at-home order for

another month. At least two Wisconsin sheriffs — in Dodge and Racine counties — have spoken out against the new order. In addition, the Tavern League called for beginning to allow bars and restaurants to open May 1 with some restrictions, and GOP legislative leaders have threatened to sue.

Evers said meeting the Tavern League's call would be a "tough row to hoe," but offered no timeline for when the state could move through the phases.

The first phase includes allowing gatherings of up to 10 people, restaurants opening with social distancing requirements, and K-12 schools and childcare resuming full operations. The second phase would allow gatherings of up to 50 people, restaurants resuming full operation, bars being allowed to operate with social distancing requirements, and postsecondary institutions resuming operations.

The final phase includes a resumption of all business activity and gatherings with minimal protective and preventive measures.

"It's going to be a 24-7 war on this virus, and we're going to take it on and eventually get to the point where we can reopen the economy," said Evers, who has dubbed the proposal the "Badger Bounce Back."

The criteria include:

- *ensuring every Wisconsin who has symptoms being able to get a lab test with results reported to public health officials within 48 hours. The administration listed a goal of 85,000 tests per week, or about 12,000 a day. Aside from the new plan, Evers also announced a partnership with the private sector has pushed the number of laboratories performing COVID-19 tests to 36 compared to eight a month ago. The effort is looking to add additional labs.

- *increasing contact tracing personnel by up to 1,000 people with technology to ensure those infected or exposed can safely isolate or quarantine.

Fitzgerald and Vos rejected the suggestion that Evers' new plan mirrors guidelines from the federal government, arguing the state needs to move toward a regional approach for relaxing restrictions.

They said the state currently isn't using its full testing capacity. That means requiring an increase on that front only serves to delay moving beyond the current restrictions. They called for Evers to move from a one-size-fits-all approach to a

regional one, adding the state needs certainty.

“As we have seen too often throughout the pandemic, the governor says something one day and the opposite the next,” the GOP leaders said. “That is why we can’t afford to withdraw our impending legal action. Too much is at stake. It’s clear one person shouldn’t be allowed to unilaterally rule over businesses, families and the state’s future.”

The new order issued yesterday includes a severability clause stating if any piece is struck down, the rest would remain in effect.

See the release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2020/gov-evers-announces-badger-bounce-back-plan/>

See the order:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200420Order.pdf>

See the plan:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200420Plan.pdf>

See the release on the effort to expand testing capacity:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2020/gov-evers-announces-wisconsin-is-taking-big-steps-to-increase-covid-19-testing-capacity/>