

Kapenga on 'UpFront' says lawmakers looking for common ground with Evers on COVID-19 legislation

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Incoming Wisconsin Senate President Chris Kapenga says lawmakers will be meeting next week to see if there is "common ground" with the Republican-controlled Assembly and Democratic Gov. Tony Evers.

Evers met Friday with the top leaders in both chambers on COVID-19 relief.

"Obviously, the citizens of Wisconsin have been speaking up, saying 'Hey, we really want you guys to get together and get something done,'" Kapenga said in an interview aired Sunday on "UpFront," produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Kapenga said a couple of ideas in Evers' COVID package were good. Senators have additional ideas of what they would like to see done, including protections for schools, churches, and non-profits from frivolous lawsuits over COVID-19.

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Kapenga also said he has been looking closely at the number of available ICU beds, a concern raised by the Wisconsin Hospital Association in a letter to the governor and top lawmakers last week. The WHA asked for additional regional facilities to take the strain off hospitals, which are filling up with COVID-19 patients.

Kapenga said the need for and the number of ICU beds would be a factor in whether lawmakers move forward with a plan to create more regional facilities.

"Obviously we're concerned as the numbers continue to rise," he said.

Senate Minority Leader Janet Bewley, D-Town of Mason, countered that lawmakers “need to actually get on the floor and pass some legislation” to address the COVID-19 crisis.

She said the Legislature’s Republican leaders need to meet with the governor and show “the willingness to actually follow through.”

“If it’s just a matter of ‘Oh yeah, we’ve reached a conclusion, but then we never get to the floor, what’s the point?’” Bewley said. “Are you, Republicans, willing to come to the floor and do something now? That’s the real question.”

Also on the program, Dr. Anthony Fauci of the White House Coronavirus Task Force said the coming holidays place the country in a “precarious situation” with the continued rise of COVID-19 cases and deaths.

Fauci said large family gatherings for the holidays could increase the spread, and families would have to weigh the risk.

“We’re going to have to take a look in our own families, when you have people who might be of a high risk of serious outcome — either elderly or underlying conditions — is it wise and prudent to have the kind of traditional celebrations that we do?” Fauci said.

He conceded “everyone is so worn down with COVID fatigue,” but he wants people to know that vaccines are on the horizon and will soon be in use.

Fauci said widespread use of vaccines would “crush” COVID-19.

“The message is hang in there, because help is really on the way,” Fauci said.

In another segment, Milwaukee County Elections Director Julietta Henry spoke about the recount underway in the county. President Trump’s campaign last week requested and paid for a recount in Milwaukee and Dane counties.

Recounts typically do not change the outcome of an election, Henry said.

“We have no doubt that the recount will, again, reveal the same results that they did on election night,” Henry said.

She said staff, volunteers and observers must go through a COVID-19 screening

before entering the rooms in Milwaukee's Wisconsin Center, where the recount is going on.

Doing a recount during a pandemic is “very concerning to us and we want to make sure everyone is safe,” she said.

See more from the program:

<http://www.wisn.com/upfront>