

Majority Leader Rep. Steineke: Assembly passes bipartisan COVID-19 response bill

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MADISON – Representative Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) joined Assembly colleagues in an extraordinary session Tuesday afternoon, approving a [COVID-19 Response Bill](#) that will bring much-needed relief to Wisconsinites being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation, which was formed through discussion with leadership from both parties along with the governor’s office, gives the Evers administration flexibility in responding to the public health emergency and helps Wisconsin capture millions more in federal dollars. The Assembly approved the bill with broad bipartisan support.

Making the afternoon’s extraordinary session even more extraordinary, a large number of representatives participated virtually for the first time in state history. Rep. Steineke, along with others, opted to attend the session day in-person, following a set of guidelines to ensure proper social distancing was maintained.

“While our neighbors and communities are feeling the effects of the coronavirus pandemic already, it was our job as legislators to step up to the plate and ensure we’re doing all we can to ease that burden as much as possible,” said Rep. Steineke. “This legislation will help fill the gaps for struggling Wisconsin families during these difficult times.”

The COVID-19 Response Bill eliminates the one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits, allowing Wisconsinites to begin collecting unemployment benefits immediately after their job loss – both at the state and federal levels. The legislation also:

- Eases licensing requirements for health care professionals and emergency medical responders
- Allows pharmacists to extend prescriptions
- Expands SeniorCare to include coverage of vaccinations
- Ensures no co-pays for COVID-19 testing
- Prohibits health insurance coverage discrimination based on COVID-19
- Provides the needed flexibilities to school districts to complete the school year online
- Sets aside \$75 million to address future, unexpected needs that federal dollars don't cover
- Requires the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to develop a plan to assist the state's main industries (tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, construction and retail)

“I’m proud that during these unprecedented times, we were able to come together and find common ground to create this legislation,” continued Rep. Steineke. “This was a truly bipartisan effort that I’m confident will be approved by the state Senate and Governor Evers soon.”

The bill now heads to the state Senate, who is expected to act on the bill on Wednesday.