

# Opportunity Wisconsin: Statement on President Trump's move to force meat processing plants to remain open

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MADISON, Wis. — Today, on the heels of [Workers Memorial Day](#), Opportunity Wisconsin released the following statement as President Donald Trump [signed an executive order](#) compelling meat processing plants to remain open, despite hundreds of COVID-19 cases being linked to these types of facilities across Wisconsin. According to the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), “at least 551 meat and food processing workers at seven Wisconsin factories have tested positive – or the equivalent of nearly 9% of the state’s reported cases.”

“As positive COVID-19 cases continue to skyrocket in Brown County, particularly among frontline plant employees, it’s unconscionable that President Trump would play politics with the health and safety of Wisconsin’s workers,” said Mark Westphal, Opportunity Wisconsin steering committee member and president of the Fox Valley Labor Council. “Workers should never be put in a position where they have to choose between their livelihood and their lives. Unfortunately, this is yet another example of President Trump rewarding the wealthy and well-connected while Wisconsin workers are left to suffer.”

According to the [Green Bay Press Gazette](#), health officials have traced at least 189 positive cases of the virus to the JBS Packerland Plant, located in Brown County. As of April 24, “Brown County now has by far the highest rate of tests coming back positive for COVID-19 among Wisconsin’s 72 counties.” On Sunday, April 26, JBS

USA Holdings, Inc. announced the temporary closure of their Green Bay facility. The outbreak is now being investigated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

JBS USA has a [long track record](#) of repeatedly putting their workers at risk. With this order, President Trump is giving JBS USA a shield from any liability, even after they caused a significant COVID-19 outbreak in the Green Bay area. To make matters worse, the Trump administration [will not be requiring](#) JBS USA or other meat processing facilities to follow basic safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This latest move from President Trump is not surprising. Over the course of his time in office, President Trump has continuously prioritized big corporations like JBS USA, over the Wisconsin workers that make these corporations run, including:

- [Rolling back](#) regulations protecting meat-industry workers.
- Giving JBS USA [\\$67 million](#) in bailout funds meant for farmers struggling in the wake of his trade war.
- Allowing multinational corporations to benefit from changes to the international tax system that will [cost](#) American taxpayers \$14 billion. JBS USA also benefited from the reduction in the domestic corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent.

Jarrett Brown, a former employee of a Wisconsin meatpacking plant, shared his thoughts with Opportunity Wisconsin in [a video filmed earlier this year](#), “Everybody who works at the plant, including myself, we’re living paycheck to paycheck. Last year there were like 4 or 5 times where I just didn’t have enough money to pay the rent. The company’s worth billions and billions of dollars. They got that huge tax break from Donald Trump and what did we get? They’re trying to nickel and dime the workers. The decisions being made in Washington, D.C. by Donald Trump are hurting the people of Wisconsin.”

## About Opportunity Wisconsin

Opportunity Wisconsin is a coalition of Wisconsin residents fighting for an economy that works for working people. Through our stories, we're elevating the real consequences of the destructive economic policies championed by President Trump and his allies these past three years, and showing how they have made Wisconsin's economy worse off. Join us in demanding our elected officials focus more on growing the economy for middle class folks and expanding opportunity for all Wisconsinites, not just the wealthy few. To learn more about Opportunity Wisconsin, visit [OpportunityWisconsin.org](https://OpportunityWisconsin.org) or stay connected on Twitter at [@OpportunityWI](https://twitter.com/OpportunityWI) and on Facebook at [Facebook.com/OpportunityWI](https://Facebook.com/OpportunityWI).

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