

Protect Our Care Wisconsin: Too Little, Too Late: Sen. Ron Johnson helped McConnell obstruct real relief for months as Wisconsinites suffered raging virus, economic pain, budget cuts

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WISCONSIN — In the months that the Senate GOP failed to produce an adequate coronavirus relief bill, Wisconsinites have suffered. Not only did the state face a deadly autumn, but thousands of Wisconsinites are facing eviction, others have left the labor force amid difficulties finding employment, and hundreds of thousands remain out of work.

Governor Tony Evers has been forced to slash millions from essential areas like Medicaid, education and the Department of Health Services, and is begging the federal government for funding to maintain contact tracing and testing initiatives following one of the worst outbreaks in the country.

And though Congress is finalizing a new relief bill, it's unlikely to address the full scope of the health and economic crisis in Wisconsin. Thanks to Senate Republicans — including Senator Ron Johnson, who blocked \$1,200

relief payments — the too-little, too-late nature of a last ditch effort will fail to provide true relief to Wisconsin families.

GOP Obstruction of Coronavirus Relief Harmed Wisconsinites Who Lost Jobs, Missed Rent

Thousands Of Wisconsinites Are Unemployed Or Have Left The Workforce

- **Wisconsin Has Lost More Than 177,000 Private Sector Jobs This Year, And Unemployment Continues To Exceed Last Year's Rates.**
“Wisconsin’s unemployment rate dropped to 5% in November from 6% in October even as coronavirus cases were spiking in the state, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development reported Thursday. The state rate is below the national unemployment rate for November of 6.7%. A year ago the state rate was 3.5%. Wisconsin lost 1,000 private-sector jobs in November and is down 177,600 for the year.” [Associated Press, [12/17/20](#)]
- **Wisconsin Has Reported More Unemployment Claims Since March Than From 2016 To 2019 Combined.** “Unemployment claims skyrocketed across Wisconsin in the weeks after the pandemic began back in March and some businesses were forced to limit services or close entirely. The more than 8 million weekly claims received by [the Department of Workforce Development] since March 15 have surpassed the 7.2 million claims handled by the department between 2016 and 2019. Last year the department handled a little more than 287,000 claims.” [Wisconsin State Journal, [11/25/20](#)]
- **About Four In Ten Wisconsinites Report That They Or Someone In Their Household Lost A Job Or Income Because Of COVID-19.**
“Wisconsin has been the state hardest hit by the pandemic among the top battlegrounds in the 2020 presidential race. On a record-breaking day, the state reported more than 5,700 new cases Tuesday and surpassed 50,000 active cases. The previous record for new cases reported in a day, about 5,200, was set Saturday. Before last week, the state had never reported more than 5,000 cases in a day. About four in 10 voters said they or someone in their household had lost a job or income because of the crisis.” [Milwaukee

Journal Sentinel, [11/4/20](#)]

- **Wisconsin's Labor Force Lost More Than 20,000 Participants Last Month, Driving A Slight Decrease In Unemployment.** “There is good news in the latest monthly jobs report for Wisconsin. The unemployment rate dropped from 6% in October to 5% in November. Dig a little deeper, however, and the numbers are not quite as encouraging. The state's labor force lost 23,100 people over the month and the labor force participation rate dropped by a half-point to 66.9%. Unemployment was down by 33,000, but employment was up just 9,900, according to place of residence data released by the Department of Workforce Development.” [Milwaukee Business News, [12/18/20](#)]
- **According To Wisconsin's Department Of Workforce Development, Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Numbers Show That More Than 156,000 Wisconsinites Remain Out Of Work.** The seasonally adjusted Wisconsin labor force summary suggests that 156,500 people in Wisconsin were unemployed in November 2020, compared to 107,600 in November of last year. [Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, [12/17/20](#)]

Wisconsinites Face A “Catastrophic” Winter Without Housing, Food Assistance

- **The New Relief Bill Only Scratches The Surface Of The Housing Assistance Needed By Renters, In Wisconsin And Nationwide.** “Chris Mokler heads the COVID-19 task force for the Wisconsin Apartment Association. He said the current coronavirus relief bill being debated in Congress includes \$25 billion for rent relief, but as of Nov. 1, \$37 billion was owed by renters. That number is now approaching \$70 billion.” [Wisconsin Public Radio, [12/18/20](#)]
- **Since A Statewide Moratorium On Evictions Expired May 26, More Than 12,000 Evictions Have Been Filed In Wisconsin — Representing A 12 Percent Increase Over The Average Number Filed From 2011 To 2019.** “The eviction of [Heidi] Oertel and [Tom] Danielson is just one of 12,224 filed in Wisconsin as of Thursday since May 26, when Gov. Tony Evers' 60-day eviction moratorium lifted, court records show. The number of evictions represents a more than 12% increase over the average number filed in the same time period from 2011-19, according to an UpNorthNews analysis of

court filings.” [UpNorthNews, [12/16/20](#)]

- **“Catastrophic”: As Many As One Third Of Wisconsin Renters Are At Risk Of Eviction When A Federal Moratorium Expires At The End Of The Year.** “Eleven housing advocates and other experts from around the state told UpNorthNews they expect a flood of evictions to come with the new year. Some said as many as one-third of Wisconsin renters are at risk when the floodgates open. ‘I’m not by nature a dramatic person, but I think the word ‘catastrophic’ is completely applicable,’ said Colleen Foley, executive director of the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, one of the nation’s oldest public-interest law firms. ‘It’s January, it’s the Wisconsin winter, and we have a raging pandemic.’” [UpNorthNews, [12/16/20](#)]
- **The Federal Moratorium Halts Evictions But Still Requires Renters To Come Up With Missed Payments And Associated Late Fees Once It Expires.** “The CDC’s moratorium is not as sweeping in its scope of protection as [Governor] Evers’ [spring] order and explicitly requires renters to pay all of their back rent and associated late fees or fines. The CDC order will lift Jan. 1, likely prompting a huge surge of people being forced from their homes in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic that continues to stress the economy and infect or kill thousands of Wisconsinites.” [UpNorthNews, [12/16/20](#)]
- **Thirteen Percent Of Wisconsin Adults With Children Reported “Sometimes” Or “Often” Not Having Enough Food To Eat From September To October, While Fourteen Percent Worry About Rent.** A national report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that 13 percent of parents in Wisconsin reported that their families sometimes or often did not have enough to eat, and that 14 percent reported slight or no confidence in paying their rent or mortgage on time. [Annie E. Casey Foundation, “Kids, Families, and COVID-19,” [12/14/20](#)]

Republican Efforts to Deprive States of Aid After the Pandemic Drained Funds Will Harm Wisconsin, Which Has Slashed Essential Services and Is Struggling to Maintain Testing Efforts

Wisconsin Is Expected To Exceed Revenue By Millions After Pandemic Related Costs

- **State Spending In Wisconsin Is Expected To Exceed Revenues By \$373 Million — Without Taking Into Account Medicaid Costs Or New**

Spending Requests. “Wisconsin’s split government could face the most challenging budget session in a decade next year as state spending is projected to exceed revenues by about \$373.1 million — without taking into account Medicaid costs and new spending requests from state agencies, according to a new report. Using Wisconsin’s projected increases in tax collections and base spending, and excluding any new spending requests by state agencies, the nonpartisan Wisconsin Policy Forum projects lawmakers will have to navigate the state’s largest budget shortfall since 2011 as they draft the 2021-23 biennial budget.” [Wisconsin State Journal, [12/7/20](#)]

- **Wisconsin Spent \$99 Million On Competing For PPE Early In The Pandemic, In A Marketplace That States Called “The Wild West.”**

“Wisconsin spent at least \$99 million on personal protective gear and medical equipment such as ventilators during the chaotic early months of the coronavirus pandemic, with almost all the money going to out-of-state suppliers, an Associated Press analysis shows... The data covers the period from the emergence of COVID-19 in the U.S. in early 2020 to the beginning of summer, when many governors were describing the marketplace for protective gear and medical equipment as the Wild West. Supplies often went to the highest bidder, even if they were promised to someone else. Data for Wisconsin suggests purchasing agents had a difficult time finding supplies in-state.” [Associated Press, [12/19/20](#)]

...Even After Cutting \$300 Million In Spending From Essential Departments

- **Earlier This Year, Governor Tony Evers Reported That Agencies Were Cutting \$300 Million In Spending To Account For Losses Caused By The Pandemic.** “Wisconsin state agencies are cutting \$300 million, including \$45 million at the University of Wisconsin System, under the most recent round of reductions Gov. Tony Evers ordered due to losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Evers in July called on agencies to cut \$250 million from their current budgets. His administration on Tuesday announced that state agencies would be returning \$300 million to the state budget, \$50 million more than what was sought.” [Wisconsin Public radio, [9/22/20](#)]
- **The Cuts Came From Medicaid, The University Of Wisconsin, The Department Of Health Services, And The Department Of Corrections.** “Nearly half the savings, \$120 million, is coming from savings under the

Medicaid program. UW's was second highest [\$45 million], followed by \$31 million at the Department of Health Services and \$28 million at the Department of Corrections." [Associated Press, [9/22/20](#)]

- **Wisconsin Treasurer Sarah Godlewski: "Are We Going To Have To Be Cutting Or Furloughing Snowplow Drivers?"** "Smaller communities may opt to cut essential services if they are low on funds, according to Wisconsin Treasurer Sarah Godlewski. Part of the confusion from Congress, Godlewski said, was the assumption that cash-strapped communities could simply seek support from the municipal bond market, where issuances are up and interest rates are low. 'As we are going into winter, I mean, we're looking at — are we going to have to be cutting or furloughing snowplow drivers? Or are we going to have to furlough sewer workers or any sort of essential services, because we have to balance our budget at the local level,' Godlewski said in an interview. 'One of the most challenging things for local governments, especially rural governments, is that they can't just go to the bond market as easily as larger communities.'" [Politico, [12/16/20](#)]

Governor Tony Evers Has Requested Hundreds Of Millions In Assistance From The Federal Government To Maintain Efforts To Combat The Virus

- **Governor Evers Has Requested \$466 Million In Funding From The Federal Government To Maintain Testing And Contact Tracing Efforts.** "Gov. Tony Evers... sent a letter to President Donald Trump and the 10 members of Wisconsin's congressional delegation pushing for additional dollars to maintain testing, contact tracing and other COVID-19 measures. He said the state would need another \$466 million to continue those efforts through the first quarter of 2021, citing inaction from the Republican-led Legislature, which hasn't convened since passing its first and only COVID-19 response bill more than seven months ago." [The Capital Times, [12/8/20](#)]
- **Evers' Request Sought Funds For Testing Sites, Vaccine Distribution, Hospital Surge Capacity, And Lab Diagnostics.** "The funding Evers is seeking includes \$255 million for testing kits and lab diagnostics, \$36 million for contact tracing, \$105 million for hospital surge capacity, \$58 million for testing sites and \$10 million for vaccine infrastructure. The final category is

critical as state officials have told reporters they don't have the funding to support a program to distribute vaccines into the future, though Evers pledged the state would 'find the resources' in a briefing last week." [The Capital Times, [12/8/20](#)]

Senator Ron Johnson Obstructed Coronavirus Relief and Direct Payments to Wisconsinites and Supported Dangerous Corporate Legal Protections

- **Senator Ron Johnson Blocked \$1,200 Direct Payments — Desired By The White House, Republicans, And Democrats — Twice.** “Sen. Ron Johnson is rolling out a bold platform as he weighs whether to run for reelection: He’s the guy who twice shut down \$1,200 stimulus checks that would have gone to hundreds of thousands of his constituents... The push for direct payments comes as Democratic and Republican leaders are racing to finalize a coronavirus relief package as well as avert a government shutdown. While there’s general agreement around providing about \$600 in direct payments, [Sen. Bernie] Sanders and Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) are pushing for more. Earlier Friday, Johnson also blocked a proposal from Hawley for about \$1,200 in stimulus checks. The direct payments are a priority for the White House.” [Politico, [12/18/20](#)]
- **Senator Ron Johnson Supported A “Relief” Bill That Included Special Legal Protections For Corporations.** “Johnson (R-Wis.) defended his objection to the pandemic-related proposal from Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) Friday afternoon, citing concerns about the federal deficit, and accused the Vermont independent of lying about the GOP position on coronavirus relief. ‘He ... said something that’s incorrect,’ Johnson said. ‘You might call it a lie. He said Republicans have done nothing. That’s not true.’ ...Johnson, in a Friday floor speech, cited a coronavirus relief proposal the GOP released early this fall that included money for unemployment benefits, another round of money for the Paycheck Protection Program and liability reform. Democrats, however, dismissed it as a partisan bill and said it was woefully inadequate.” [Politico, [12/18/20](#)]