

Rep. Pope: GOP COVID Bill an insult to victims and educators

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MADISON, Wis. – Earlier this week, after months of inaction, Assembly Republicans released a [memo](#) detailing legislation to restrict the local control of public school districts and grab more legislative power after their non-existent response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sody Pope (D-Mt. Horeb), the ranking member on the Assembly Committee on Education offered this response:

“It is beyond frustrating that after over eight months of inaction leading to 400,000 infections and 3,500 deaths due to COVID-19, Speaker Vos and Assembly Republicans would attempt a shameful power grab in place of meaningful legislation. This bill does not even pretend to be bipartisan and reeks of vindictiveness due to their party’s embarrassing loss in the presidential race,” Rep. Pope said. “Their attempt to take control of the incoming vaccine for a disease they’ve barely acknowledged is the type of reckless and dangerous power grab we’ve come to expect from Speaker Vos and the GOP. What is most disturbing, is that this missed opportunity for a real response will undoubtedly cost more lives and do further damage to our economy and public education system.”

The legislation has provisions that would enact burdensome restrictions on the power of local school boards to respond to COVID-19, especially in regards to virtual instruction. It requires that parents be paid by school districts if they assist in their child’s virtual learning, and forces teachers to instruct from school buildings. In addition, they are expanding the failed Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP) and full-time open enrollment, both of which reduce aid to resident school districts.

“The opportunistic manner in which Republicans have launched another attack on public schools is disappointing, but not surprising. Reducing aid to districts in order to bolster their pro-voucher rhetoric is typical of their for-profit approach to education. Educators have worked tirelessly to provide safe virtual learning alternatives during this difficult time and now they are being asked to risk their health just to appease the GOP’s power hungry whims,” said Rep. Pope. **“For years these same teachers have been advocating for fair pay for their work. The paltry payment the GOP is offering to parents for being involved with their child’s education is insulting to teachers’ dedication to students and the profession as a whole. The people and students of Wisconsin have waited long enough, and deserve a serious response to this crisis, not more GOP games aimed to further diminish the power of Gov. Evers.”**