

Republicans call for more aggressive approach as Evers OKs small retailers to reopen

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Gov. Tony Evers announced small retailers can now reopen as Wisconsin for the first time showed a downward trajectory over a 14-day period for the percentage of daily positive COVID-19 tests.

Still, the state on Monday met just three of the six metrics needed before moving to the next phase of the gov's plan to ease his stay-at-home order, according to Evers' health agency.

The Legislature's top two Republicans, meanwhile, continued to push Evers to more aggressively reopen the state's economy, saying 500,000 Wisconsinites are out of work.

And Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who has repeatedly pushed for a regional approach to reopening the economy, switched gears and now wants all of Wisconsin reopened at the same time.

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"It's another day and another confusing emergency order," said Vos, R-Rochester. "We've flattened the curve by being careful and using common sense. With more testing, we're seeing a smaller percentage of positive cases. This shutdown has put half a million people out of work. It's time to get everyone back to work in every part of the state."

Some retailers had complained that they were shuttered March 25 by the gov's first stay-at-home order while big-box retailers were allowed to remain open.

Evers said during a briefing Monday his latest order is aimed at small retailers, calling them “deserving” of the opportunity to reopen. He added the state has hit a “sweet spot” and decided to take this step because trend lines are headed in the right direction.

His administration estimates the order impacts 14,000 businesses and 90,000 jobs. Those businesses will still have to operate under some restrictions, including a limit of five customers at a time.

“The reason we’re doing this slowly is to watch it. We’ll watch this to see how it goes. We feel confident this is a good place to start to continue to move forward.”

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, tweeted his hope this was just the beginning.

“More small businesses are still struggling. Over half a million Wisconsinites are out of a job. We can balance public health with economic health. Let’s get Wisconsin open for business again,” Fitzgerald wrote.

The new order immediately allows standalone or strip-mall retail stores to offer in-person shopping with the limit of five customers in the store at a time, regardless of size. Shops in a traditional mall setting aren’t impacted unless they have an exterior entrance; in that case, they also must shut off the door to the enclosed mall.

Stores in an outlet mall that includes exterior entrances are covered by the order.

The new order also allows drive-in movie theaters to open.

See the release [here](#).