

WISPIRG: Without “Safer at Home” order, state legislature and local governments must act immediately to prevent the spread of COVID-19

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MADISON, Wis. — The Wisconsin Supreme Court invalidated the Department of Health Services’ extension of the state’s stay-at-home order on Wednesday, with immediate effect. Wisconsinites are now left with a patchwork of local rules and state and federal guidelines as communities confront a global pandemic that has sickened over a million people and cost at least 84,000 lives in the U.S.

WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec issued the following statement in response:

“COVID-19 continues to pose a serious risk to Wisconsinites’ health and well-being. Leading public health experts agree that, for now, physical distancing is the best way to limit the spread of this deadly disease. We should listen to the experts: Ending these restrictions now puts Wisconsinites in unnecessary danger.

“In the absence of an executive order requiring Wisconsinites to shelter in place until key benchmarks for a safe reopening are met, the legislature must act as quickly as possible to replace DHS’s ‘Safer at Home’ measures. Lawmakers should refer to [criteria developed by leading public health experts at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security](#), which include a steady decline of new COVID-19 cases, widely available testing, sufficient healthcare system capacity and effective contact tracing.

“Developing new safety measures through the legislative or administrative

rulemaking process will take time. In the meantime, to stop a deadly spike in COVID-19 cases, local governments must step up immediately to put in place their own, robust stay-at-home orders.

“Finally, Wisconsin won’t be able to reopen safely without a more effective national effort to address COVID-19. Wisconsin’s and other states’ ability to stock adequate testing and medical supplies hinges on a coordinated national effort to make and distribute necessary equipment. We need national leadership to increase production of these crucial pandemic-fighting materials, and most of all, to coordinate the response to ensure states have enough supplies when they need them.”