

Evers issues new health emergency as Republicans decry 'go-it-alone approach'

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Declaring he is putting the public before politics, Gov. Tony Evers on Thursday issued a new public health declaration and mask mandate before Republicans had taken the final step to overturn the one he issued last month.

In a video message accompanying his action, Evers said the “fight against this virus isn’t over.” He added he earlier promised to never play politics with Wisconsinites’ health, would trust science and would never stop doing “everything in my power to keep Wisconsinites healthy and safe.”

“We’re going to keep putting people first, we’re going to keep listening to the science, and we’re going to keep working to save lives so we can get through this pandemic together,” Evers said in the message.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, told WisPolitics.com it was another example of Evers refusing to work with lawmakers. He said it was particularly disappointing that Evers issued the new order considering Assembly Republicans earlier in the day had invited him to work on a rules package that would enact a limited mask requirement for hospitals, schools, and other places.

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“Instead, he again chose a go-it-alone approach,” Vos said. “It’s just the way this governor works, and it’s disappointing and it’s undemocratic.”

The back-and-forth is playing out with the state Supreme Court poised to rule whether state law allows the gov to issue multiple public health declarations stemming from the same pandemic. The court heard arguments in the case last fall,

but hasn't indicated when a decision could come down.

Calling the current situation a "constitutional crisis," GOP state Sen. Steve Nass, R-Whitewater, said he will immediately draft a resolution to overturn today's declaration. He co-authored the resolution that cleared both houses over the past week to end the previous order Evers issued.

Nass also said he will encourage GOP leadership to consider filing an emergency action with the state Supreme Court.

Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, said only "a court can stop a governor bent on ignoring the law."

"The People of Wisconsin can no longer be subjected to confusing, unilateral decrees without basis in statute. We must reinstate the rule of law, uphold separation of powers, and restore confidence in our system of government," he said.