

Felzkowski, Roys debate repealing Evers' emergency order on 'UpFront'

Posted on Monday, Feb 1, 2021

A Republican state senator said the Senate's vote to repeal Democratic Gov. Tony Evers public health emergency order was about "illegal overreach by the governor," not masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But a Democratic senator called that argument "completely bogus."

Sens. Mary Felzkowski, R-Irma, and Kelda Roys, D-Madison, appeared Sunday on the statewide "UpFront" program, produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

"We did not vote on a mask mandate. We voted on a joint resolution ending a public health emergency order that was done illegally," Felzkowski said. "There is nothing in that resolution that states the word mandate, or mask mandate."

Evers imposed a statewide mask mandate in his latest 60-day public health emergency order because of the pandemic. If the state Assembly also votes to approve the joint resolution, the mask mandate would end.

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"The idea that this somehow isn't about masks is ridiculous," Roys said.

She added masks are "the most effective public health measure we have."

Felzkowski said the governor should have worked with lawmakers to create a new order, after his first 60-day order expired last spring.

"One of the largest things we see, when the governors do overreach like this, is cutting the constituents out of having this conversation. It's an absolute or nothing," Felzkowski said.

Roys countered that Evers has had to impose subsequent 60-day emergency orders because the Republican-controlled Legislature “has refused to act.”

She said Republicans “ran to court to stop the governor from being able to implement life-saving measures” and have not wanted to help the governor, only take away his power.

In another segment, UW System President Tommy Thompson said even if the statewide mask mandate falls, a mask rule will remain in place on UW campuses.

“For the university, we need a mask. And the students have responded tremendously. The cultural responsibility for the students of putting on their masks, wearing them, socially distance and the testing have kept our campuses the healthiest and the safest place to be during this epidemic,” Thompson said.

Thompson, who is 79, also said he recently got the COVID-19 vaccine.

“I feel great! And I would strongly encourage everybody to take the vaccine. I used to be secretary of Health and Human Services, I was in charge of FDA. I know how careful and scientifically they are involved in making sure that a vaccine and the medicines are safe and efficacious,” he said.

Thompson also said the university can start giving vaccinations to people in the wider community once it receives enough vaccine to do so.

He said he has 26 campuses and students, instructors and deans all ready to start mass vaccinations.

“I know in a big rollout like this there’s going to be some administrative problems, some logistical problems,” he said. “But the truth of the matter is we’re waiting for the vaccine.

“Give us the vaccine, and we’ll show you how fast we can do it,” he said.

In another segment, WISN 12 reporter Matt Smith talked to Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, about whether he has made a decision on running for re-election in 2022. Johnson said he has not, and he feels no pressure to do so.

But the Lincoln Project, a group of former Republican strategists who formed to oppose President Trump and what they call “Trumpism,” promises to work toward

Johnson's defeat.

"I would say I think that he should expect we will bring all the tools in our toolbox and all the assets available to us to the fight to ensure he doesn't serve another term in the U.S. Senate," said Lincoln Project co-founder Reed Galen.

See more from the program:

<https://www.wisn.com/upfront>