

Gov. Evers: Puts public health before politics, signs new public health emergency

Posted on Thursday, Feb 4, 2021

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today signed Executive Order #105 and Emergency Order #1 establishing a statewide public health emergency and requiring face coverings in public places to protect the health and safety of Wisconsinites. The governor's orders today come as Republicans in the Legislature voted to end the governor's previous public health emergency and relating order requiring face coverings in public places. Executive Order #105 is available [here](#) and Emergency Order #1 is available [here](#). The orders are effective immediately.

The governor also released a video message to the people of Wisconsin. The video message can be found [here](#). A full transcript of the video is available below.

In October, a [Marquette University Law Poll](#) found 72% of Wisconsinites agreed that masks should be required in public places, and that support for a mask requirement exceeded 60% in all regions of the state at that time.

Today's action by Republicans in the Legislature is a continuation of Republicans' efforts to prevent Gov. Evers from keeping Wisconsinites healthy and safe. The governor's statewide mitigation strategies to contain and respond to COVID-19 have been met with repeated lawsuits, political rhetoric, and obstruction from Republicans since last April. Republicans also sued Gov. Evers last spring, which ultimately led to a decision by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to strike down Wisconsin's Safer at Home order [in May](#), leaving the state without critical mitigation tools to protect health and safety used by other states. In total, Republicans in the Legislature this year alone have [spent millions](#) in

taxpayer dollars in litigation to hamstring the state's ability to respond to the ongoing pandemic rather than meet to address the issues facing Wisconsinites.

Despite writing in a brief to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in April 2020 that stated Republicans were "drafting even now" legislation to respond to the pandemic, Republicans have not sent a bill to the governor's desk in more than 290 days.

Video Transcript

You know, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I've promised you three things:

The first, that I would never play politics with your health.

The second, that I would trust and follow science and public health experts to guide our decision-making.

And finally, that I would never stop doing everything in my power to keep Wisconsinites healthy and safe.

Well, every step of the way, our statewide strategies to contain this virus and prevent the spread have been met with lawsuits, political rhetoric, and obstruction.

Unfortunately, that happened again today when Republicans in the Legislature came in to vote down our state's public health emergency and end requiring face coverings in public places.

And, in so doing, they also put at risk nearly \$50 million a month in federal funds that will go toward helping hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable Wisconsinites have access to food assistance during this pandemic. Folks, that is wrong.

Here's the truth: we know that wearing face coverings can save lives and prevent death; we know it's supported by science and the CDC; and we know it's supported by more than 40 statewide organizations and the 72% of Wisconsinites who agree face coverings should be worn in public places.

And most importantly, we know that as we work to get shots in arms as quickly as

we have vaccines available, no amount of vaccine in the world could bring back the lives we stand to lose if we have no statewide mitigation strategy in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin.

So, here's the bottom line: I haven't broken those promises I made to you during this pandemic, and I won't start today.

That's why today we will be issuing a new public health emergency and order requiring face coverings in public places.

Our fight against this virus isn't over-it's not going away, especially as we see mutations of this virus in our state and others.

Wearing a mask is the most basic thing we can do to keep each other safe. If the Legislature keeps playing politics and we don't keep wearing masks, we're going to see more preventable deaths, and it's going to take even longer to get our state and our economy back on track.

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.

Thank you.