

# Rep. Allen: To mask, or not to mask, that is not the question

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Some see the mask as a symbol of safety and precaution. Some see the mask as a symbol of oppression. Both are correct.

Many scientists and medical professionals believe that the widespread wearing of masks helps us fight the spread of the coronavirus. In certain circumstances where distancing is not possible masks provide an added level of protection against the spread of the virus. And we know that the effectiveness of mask-wearing increases if all parties involved in a close interaction are wearing a mask.

When we take those facts and extrapolate them to the extreme and insist that all people should wear masks all the time in all circumstances, then we approach oppression. When we impose a mandate statewide to require mask-wearing in every indoor situation, we usurp an important component of a strong society – personal responsibility. More problematic is when emergency powers conveyed to the governor through the statutes are abused by the governor to impose his will upon the people.

The Governor's original emergency declaration, Executive Order #72 expired on May 11, 2020. Statutes require that if the Governor believes that a state of emergency should be extended beyond the original 60-day period, he or she must seek approval of the legislature. Gov. Evers has since issued Executive Orders #82, #90, #95, and now #104. By continuing his Executive Orders ad infinitum, Gov. Evers has blurred the line between his role and the legislature's role. When the Governor takes emergency measures beyond the 60 days provided in statutes he does so without the expressed will of the People of the State of Wisconsin through its elected legislature.

On Thursday, the Assembly approved Senate Joint Resolution 3 ([SJR3](#)) which terminates the illegally-issued Executive Order #104. Also on Thursday, the majority of Assembly members also sent a letter to the governor suggesting, as we did last spring, that the governor propose administrative rules regarding masking requirements. Working with the legislature through the rule-making process we together can find a reasonable solution to the question of masking to help keep people safe. The rule-making process allows for deliberation and public input. Those are critical ingredients in a democratic republic, and they help to prevent oppression.

In closing it is important for us to recognize that 1) we are still in the midst of a pandemic, and 2) the elimination of a state mandate does not mean that private property owners and businesses, as well as local units of government, may not have their own mask requirements. We must continue to be respectful of one another.