

Rep. Shankland: Statement on Assembly session

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Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) released the following statement following today's session of the Wisconsin State Assembly:

“Today should have been focused on passing the bipartisan COVID-19 compromise bill that the State Senate and Governor Evers had already agreed to – Wisconsin families, workers, and businesses need and deserve that relief. Instead, the Legislature amended Assembly Bill 1 to limit the governor’s authority to respond to public health emergencies. They put overdue COVID-19 relief in jeopardy as they repealed the statewide mask order.”

“I’m deeply disappointed in the lack of action and urgency from the Legislature and the majority party’s willingness to play politics with the public health. While some of my colleagues will claim this is not about masks, but rather about the governor’s executive authority, the simple truth is that the Legislature could have passed a bill to require masks at any time over the last six months. They didn’t. Instead, they went to court. Today, my Democratic colleagues and I introduced an amendment to the COVID-19 bill to include masking requirements. They refused to take it up – making it clear to all of us that it has always been about masks.

“My greatest regret about this pandemic – other than its existence – is how politicized it has become, limiting our ability to effectively fight the pandemic. Public health interventions like wearing masks are recommended by scientists. Politicizing mask wearing when it’s one of the only tools we have as a state to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is heart-breaking. We need *teamwork* to beat this pandemic. I can’t emphasize enough that we need to follow the science in order for us to keep schools and businesses open and return to our former lives.

“In times of crisis, it’s our duty to come together and act quickly and diligently to protect the public health and invest in the programs that people rely on. While I’m grateful that vaccine distribution is ramping up, this pandemic is far from over, and we must fulfill our duties as legislators to work together to protect the public health and support our communities. Taking away the statewide mask mandate at this critical moment when we have multiple highly transmissible COVID-19 variants is reckless, and doing so while further delaying the passage of pandemic relief is irresponsible.”

“While I’m disheartened that the Assembly has ended the mask order, it is important to note that it has no direct effect on our local governments’ or private businesses’ authority to require face coverings.* Especially in light of the new, dangerous COVID-19 variants that are emerging, I strongly encourage local governments and businesses to enact or continue to enforce their own mask requirements to help us prevent the spread of COVID-19. We all can play our part too by wearing a mask, washing our hands, limiting the households we interact with, and social distancing.”