

Sen. Cowles: Votes to support mask use, health care community

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after voting against 2021 Senate Joint Resolution 3 which, pending Assembly concurrence, halts the Governor’s Public Health Emergency:

“Greg Abbott, Charlie Baker, Doug Burgum, Spencer Cox, Mike DeWine, Mark Gordon, Gary Herbert, Larry Hogan, Eric Holcomb, Asa Hutchinson, Kay Ivey, Jim Justice, Tate Reeves, Kim Reynolds, Phil Scott, and Chris Sununu – what do all of these people have in common? They’re all Republican Governors who have designed and imposed mask mandates in their states. Why? It’s because they listened to health care providers and the families of residents who’ve been impacted by COVID-19 in their respective states, and it’s because they listened to the [science](#) of how masks can slow the spread.

“I’ve heard from dozens of constituents in the past few days – health care workers, families of those who were seriously ill or passed, vulnerable residents, and essential workers – asking me to support the continued use of masks. Meanwhile, in the months this mandate has been in place, I haven’t heard from any Wisconsin residents who’ve been cited for a violation of these orders. The imposition of the mask mandate has helped to get Wisconsinites to understand the importance of masks without spurring much if any enforcement action, but I fear that today’s repeal of the mandate could change the principle of mask wearing in Wisconsinites’ minds.

*“While I agree it’s the Legislature’s role to address legality in government, I’ve read s. 323.10, Wis. Stats., and I don’t see anything prohibiting a Governor from declaring successive emergency orders under this 40-plus year-old law which could have been clarified in 20+ legislative sessions, including this session. With all this in-mind, I voted my conscious today and rejected overturning the Public Health Emergency. The message I want to send to my district and our state could not be clearer. **Please, wear a mask in public, socially distance, avoid large gatherings, practice good hand hygiene, and stay home and seek a test when you’re under the weather.***”

“This isn’t a lockdown or a forced shutdown of certain businesses. Instead, this mandate was codifying what hundreds of businesses, schools, churches, non-profits, and health clinics already had in place before the Governor issued his first order. I assume many of those businesses will continue their mask policies to help keep COVID-19 under control in Wisconsin. But it all starts with you. In the beginning, I listed over a dozen Republican Governors who have issued mask mandates because it’s important to understand that this shouldn’t be political. It’s about our neighbors and getting life back to normal as quickly as possible.”

“Mandate or not, you don’t have to be afraid of the consequences from getting COVID-19 to choose to follow the public health guidelines. We can control COVID-19 by just caring about the health and wellbeing of our families, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and fellow community members.”