

Sen. Smith: Wisconsinites still waiting on COVID-19 relief thanks to Republicans

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MADISON - For the third time in less than a month, the Wisconsin State Senate voted on the hyper partisan COVID-19 response legislation. Senator Jeff Smith and his Democratic colleagues opposed Assembly Bill 1 today for the second time after Republicans rejected the compromise version of the bill approved on January 12, 2021.

Legislative Democrats are elevating Wisconsinite's demands for relief and renewing calls to pass legislation that will actually help in the state's recovery. Democrats' action is in response to the disappointing and confusing process the Majority Party has taken during this public health and economic crisis.

Since the beginning of the pandemic Wisconsin citizens called for the Legislature to work together to provide COVID-19 relief. Democrats echoed this call, but were met with silence from Republicans for over eight months. When the 2021-22 legislative session began, there was finally a glimmer of hope for a bipartisan COVID-19 compromise bill. Assembly Republicans squashed this hope when they threw out the compromise agreement made between the Governor and leaders of both Parties in the Senate. Senate and Assembly Republicans abandoned compromise to create a hideous version of the bill that will spread, not stop COVID-19 in Wisconsin.

To make matters worse, Republicans worked proactively to thwart our public health response by repealing Wisconsin's mask order, despite overwhelming opposition from Wisconsin residents, small businesses and medical professionals.

Legislative Democrats today took steps to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, Democrats introduced legislation to reinforce the statewide mask order in Wisconsin. This bill comes the day after Republicans passed the resolution repealing the mask order despite not having any other public health safeguard in place.

“If Republicans won’t do something during this crisis, Democrats will,” said Senator Jeff Smith (D - Brunswick) after the February 5th Senate session. *“It’s been almost a year. Unfortunately, Republicans delivered a whole lot of nothing disguised in a bill to say they did something. It’s a shame Republicans failed to lead through this crisis.”*

“The people spoke loud and clear. My Democratic colleagues and I are listening. We won’t stop pushing for bold and urgent action during this unprecedented crisis.”