

WisDems: ICYMI - GOP candidate John Macco questions life-saving vaccines, spreads alarming COVID-19 misinformation

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MADISON, Wis. — In an interview with the Green Bay Press-Gazette, GOP Rep. John Macco, who has filed paperwork to run for governor, questioned the science behind life-saving vaccines and likened the COVID-19 pandemic to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Macco said he believes “natural systemic immunity” provides better protection than vaccines, despite [health experts saying that’s false](#). He’s even touted [ivermectin](#), which [has poisoned 17 Wisconsinites](#), as a potential cure.

Likely GOP candidate Rebecca Kleefisch has also been reckless when it comes to the pandemic – [promoting anti-vaccine posts online](#), [supporting bogus treatments for COVID-19](#), and [attending and promoting potential super spreader events](#).

“None of the GOP gubernatorial hopefuls have encouraged Wisconsinites to get the life-saving COVID-19 vaccine,” said **Democratic Party of Wisconsin Rapid Response Director Kayla Anderson**. “Both Kleefisch and Macco hold the same radical views on COVID-19, and could endanger Wisconsin’s recovery from the pandemic. Wisconsinites can trust Gov. Tony Evers to continue to put public health above politics.”

Read more about Macco's alarming views on the pandemic below.

[Green Bay Press-Gazette: Rep. John Macco: 'I'm not a COVID truther,' yet questions state numbers as he eyes run for governor](#)

A lawmaker from the Green Bay area considering a run for governor claims a Wisconsin agency is exaggerating the threat of COVID-19 and compared initial fears of the coronavirus to those about contracting AIDS in the 1980s.

Rep. John Macco, a Republican from Ledgeview, filed paperwork in August for a gubernatorial campaign to unseat Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who is pursuing a second term in the fall 2022 elections. In a recent interview, Macco claimed that “natural systemic immunity” — that is, natural immune protection through infection — provides more protection against COVID-19 than vaccines, despite data showing otherwise.

His comments provide the first look at how Macco would approach the pandemic as governor and came as a new surge of COVID-19 pushes case levels to pre-vaccination levels and threatens to overwhelm hospitals and further stress health care workers.

“I’m not denying the issue. I’m not a COVID truther,” Macco said in the interview with the Green Bay Press-Gazette, as he referred to those who deny COVID-19 causes serious illness or death. “Initially, it looked like it was going to be bad, and it’s bad, but they were off by a factor of 10 — that’s a lot.”

Asked what data he was referencing, he said only “all of that data” that covers transmission rates, those who are vulnerable to infection, “the response to the virus

itself,” and death rates.

Nearly 678,000 Wisconsin residents, equal to about 12% of the state’s population, have been recorded as contracting COVID-19 since the pandemic hit the state in February 2020, according to the state Department of Health Services.

Of those, 7,667 people had died as of reports released Tuesday.

Epidemiologists predict the actual number of infections is higher, not lower as Macco says, especially when accounting for positive cases that produced no symptoms and tests conducted at home that went unreported.

[...]

‘We didn’t know what we were dealing with,’ Macco says of HIV/AIDS

Addressing a question about the ways the state has responded to the coronavirus pandemic, Macco was quick to point out the mounting fears across the globe experienced in the early years of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

“I got married in 1978 so it really didn’t affect us, but at the time, we didn’t know what we were dealing with,” Macco said. “We didn’t know if you could get it from toilet seats, from kissing, from shaking hands. It was really very similar and reminiscent of what we dealt with last year.”

Since the beginning of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, 32 million people have died,

according to the World Health Organization.

“After a while we started to understand what it was and we understood how to protect ourselves and move forward,” Macco said.

Those who’ve documented the nation’s response to the AIDS epidemic found years of administrative failures during the Reagan and Bush years, and pushback from those administrations against the CDC, which repeatedly shared reports emphasizing the dangers of the viruses.

The early federal response underscored a lack of understanding for those both infected and at risk of contracting the virus, the majority of whom represented underserved and maligned LGBTQ+ communities.

Scientists studied the deadly AIDS policy failure so that such dismissals of prevention response were not repeated.

[...]

Meanwhile, other Republicans exploring a run for governor are former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefish, who is preparing the formal launch of her campaign, conservative lobbyist Bill McCoshen, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Kevin Nicholson, and businessman Jonathan Wichmann.

So far, none of them has spelled out how they would manage the pandemic.

Governor Tony Evers speaks Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at a news conference for the opening of the COVID-19 vaccine clinic in the Lambeau Field Atrium in Green Bay.in

Evers has implemented mitigation rules that ranged from shuttering businesses last spring to requiring face masks indoors. Republican lawmakers, including Macco, have fiercely opposed these measures and have sued or supported lawsuits to overturn them.

Very few GOP lawmakers in the state have promoted getting vaccinated.

While Macco didn't clarify his stance on vaccines, he thinks that most able-bodied people are far safer than the data coming out of the state would suggest.

"If you can't question the science, then it isn't science. It's propaganda," Macco said. "Science is essentially a hypothesis of the moment."

Remington, the former CDC epidemiologist, clarified that a hypotheses is an anecdotal observation and science is a rigorous test of that hypothesis that requires the scientific method. It may begin with a hypothesis, but through epidemiology and experimentation, scientists can develop knowledge about risk factors and prognostic factors.

"We've sort of decided (as a society) that pretty much anybody can be a scientist. It's not that easy," Remington said. "The scientific method is pretty complicated, and it requires many years of schooling and professional degrees. It's important that everybody, including our elected officials, listen to people who are experts in the field."

In one of his Facebook posts, Macco used data from the conservative think tank Maclver Institute to emphasize his stance that since April 2020 there have been vast discrepancies between the data and public health policies.

He also cited a Maclver study that claimed there was no correlation between vaccination rates and COVID-19 activity levels in Wisconsin. In his post, he said “it’s high time they consider all the data.”

It isn’t clear who, from his post, represents “they.”

Elizabeth Goodsitt, a state Department of Health Services spokeswoman, said the Maclver Institute’s conclusions are grossly incorrect.

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