

# Jerry Hanson: End the JCRAR war on pandemic responses

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Since the pandemic began Sen. Steve Nass, R-Whitewater, has used his co-chairmanship and partisan advantage, of the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules, to halt or limit efforts by Gov. Tony Evers, Wisconsin Dept of Health, UW System and now the Wisconsin Elections Commission to protect Wisconsinites from the ravages of COVID-19. After the Republican controlled legislature refused Evers's call for "special legislative actions" the governor issued executive orders for protective measures to be taken. Nass insisted that the governor's actions required JCRAR approval, even during a worldwide health pandemic. Nass used the JCRAR to limit the effectiveness of these protective directives.

The Wisconsin Dept. of Health issued preventive actions to safeguard Wisconsinites from COVID. Nass once again demanded these actions, regardless of increasing COVID cases, be brought before his committee. Nass became the self-imposed czar of any efforts to safeguard Wisconsin; claiming that government pandemic responses were an attack on individual freedoms.

UW System President Tommy Thompson issued emergency COVID directives across the state university system. Sen. Nass ordered Thompson to submit his directives for JCRAR approval despite only 14% of the U W System budget comes from state funds. Thompson informed Nass that U. W. had the authority to take nimble and reasonable steps to keep campuses open and safe. Thompson reminded Nass that the health and safety of the students, faculty and staff during a global pandemic were Thompson's responsibility not the JCRAR.

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Recently Nass announced that the Wisconsin Election Commission's emergency guidance to utilize vote drop boxes, allow nursing home residents to vote without special voting deputies present [nursing homes were closed to all visitors due to the pandemic] and allow election clerks to correct clerical omissions on absentee ballot envelopes had failed to gain JCRAR approval. Nass directed the WEC to submit to his committee's authority.

Nass insists that even short term emergency measures used in a crisis must gain his JCRAR approval. During a worldwide health pandemic we do not need a Wisconsin legislative committee wreaking havoc on state agencies as they battle to keep Wisconsinites safe and alive. The appropriateness of a handful of partisan legislators invoking roadblocks to commonsense governing during crisis situations needs to be examined as this on-going pandemic continues.

*- Hanson is a member of the Walworth County Democratic Party.*