

Gov. Evers: Announces partnership with Milwaukee Bucks to raise awareness, prevent domestic violence across Wisconsin

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 17, 2026

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New partnership builds on Evers Administration's efforts to end the cycle of violence, address rising rates of domestic violence deaths in Wisconsin, and keep kids, families, and communities safe

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers tonight, during his 2026 State of the State address, announced a new exciting partnership between the Milwaukee Bucks and the Evers Administration to raise awareness of domestic violence in Wisconsin communities, end the cycle of violence, and keep kids, families, and communities safe. Through the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), the Evers Administration will be providing over \$180,000 to support an awareness and prevention campaign to ensure Wisconsinites know the signs of abuse, how to get help, and ways to support a loved one. The governor's announcement comes as, in 2024, Wisconsin saw a record number of domestic violence deaths, claiming the lives of 99 individuals, according to a report from End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin.

Relevant excerpts from Gov. Evers' 2026 State of the State address are available below:

"There's always more work we can do, folks. Let's start with public safety. I wish Republican lawmakers would've been willing to do more during the Year of the Kid to help keep our kids, families, and communities safe. I was really disappointed that, for all of the rhetoric about who cares about crime and who doesn't,

Republicans voted against my proposal making the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention permanent. We could be doing so much more to address domestic and intimate partner violence, for example. These statistics get me really wound up. Domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin jumped by 20 percent between 2021 and 2022. 20 percent. We hit a new record high of 96 Wisconsinites murdered in domestic and intimate partner violence incidents. That record only lasted until 2024, when 99 Wisconsinites were killed.

"Folks, this trend is headed in the wrong direction. The Legislature cannot find these statistics acceptable. Yet, on top of voting not to make the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention permanent last year, Republican lawmakers also voted against my request to provide \$66 million for Victims of Crime Act programs, many of which help survivors of domestic violence and their families get back on their feet. I urge the Legislature to send bills to my desk to codify the Office of Violence Prevention and fund Victims of Crime Act programs. Do the right thing and get this done.

"In the meantime, my administration and I will continue our work, however we can, to reduce crime and violence and help make kids and families safer. So, one of the things I'm jazzed to announce tonight is that my administration will be partnering with our own Milwaukee Bucks on a public campaign to help combat domestic violence across Wisconsin "

"The Bucks feel strongly in partnering with the Governor to support his efforts to combat domestic violence in our state," said Bucks and Fiserv Forum president Josh Glessing. "We hope that our commitment in addressing this critical issue helps to further build awareness in our communities, support survivors, and end domestic violence once and for all."

Over the past seven years, Gov. Evers has made addressing violence, including and especially domestic violence, a cornerstone priority of his administration and has directed more than \$100 million of the state's allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward community safety and violence prevention efforts, including \$20 million to support Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant recipients. To support this critical work further, in 2024, Gov. Evers signed 2023 Wisconsin Act 241, which directed \$10 million to support violence prevention and crime victim and survivor services, including providing funding for sexual assault victim services, domestic abuse grants, and child advocacy grants.

Last year, Gov. Evers also signed Executive Order #254, creating a new statewide

Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention, and in December, launched a new grant program, supported by approximately \$10 million in federal funding directed by the governor, to support initiatives and programs at school districts, law enforcement agencies, domestic violence organizations, firearm retailers, and local governments, among others, to help crack down on crime and prevent violence, including intimate partner and gun violence, across Wisconsin. More information about the State Violence Prevention Grant Program offered through the Wisconsin Office of Violence Prevention is available [here](#).

The governor's 2025-27 Executive Budget requested over \$13 million and seven new positions to make the office a permanent feature of state government. Unfortunately, Republican lawmakers did not include his proposal in the final budget bill sent to his desk last year.

Gov. Evers' 2025-27 Executive Budget request also included a \$66 million investment over the biennium to support services for crime victims statewide and help critical victim service providers stay afloat after seeing significant recent reductions in federal funding under VOCA. Unfortunately, this investment was not included in the final budget by Republican lawmakers, and agencies that provide direct support to

victims have had to slash vital services. In a letter sent to members of the Wisconsin State Legislature outlining the governor's legislative priorities for 2026, Gov. Evers urged lawmakers to correct that wrong before the end of the current Legislative Session.

Additionally, the governor's letter also urged the Legislature to close a loophole in state law that allows domestic abusers to possess firearms before the end of this Legislative Session. According to End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, of the 99 domestic violence deaths in Wisconsin in 2024, 71 percent were caused by a firearm, and incidents involving a firearm were 12 times more likely to result in death. Moreover, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, the rate of gun deaths in Wisconsin has increased 18 percent from 2015 to 2024, and in every year since 2019, there have been more mass shootings than days in the year, according to data from the Gun Violence Archive.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON EVERS ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO END CYCLES OF VIOLENCE, REDUCE CRIME, AND KEEP KIDS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES SAFE

Over his tenure as governor, Gov. Evers and his administration have worked to address violence and keep kids, families, and communities safe.

In October 2019, the governor called a special session of the Wisconsin State Legislature to address gun violence in the state of Wisconsin and proposed two critical proposals relating to universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders. Despite the fact that a majority of Wisconsinites, including gun owners, support the implementation of commonsense measures like universal background checks (79 percent) and extreme risk protection orders (81 percent), Republican lawmakers refused to take up the governor's special session bills.

In recent years, Gov. Evers has directed more than \$100 million of the state's allocation of ARPA funds toward community safety and violence prevention efforts. In 2021, the governor announced an initial \$45 million investment to address the root causes of violence by investing in programs and interventions being spearheaded by organizations already working in local communities, including investing \$25 million into violence prevention efforts and \$20 million to support victim services in Wisconsin, such as:

- \$6.6 million to the Medical College of Wisconsin's (MCW) Violence Prevention Project, which is housed in their Comprehensive Injury Center. These funds are being used to support research, data collection, education, and community engagement efforts around violence prevention as a public health issue;
- \$10.4 million also to MCW's Violence Prevention Project to administer a competitive grant process to support violence prevention project efforts statewide. Ten communities and organizations were selected to receive these funds in June 2023;
- \$8 million to the city of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention, now the Office of Community Wellness and Safety, to respond to the pandemic-related uptick in violence and trauma with projects that take a public health approach to violence prevention; and
- \$20 million to support VOCA grant recipients, as the state has seen critical cuts

to federal VOCA funding over the last several years and an increased need for services.

- Gov. Evers later signed 2023 Wisconsin Act 241, which directed \$10 million to support violence prevention and crime victim and survivor services, including providing funding for sexual assault victim services, domestic abuse grants, and child advocacy grants.

To continue to build on these efforts to support safer communities, in March 2022, Gov.

Evers announced an additional more than \$50 million investment of ARPA funds in community safety and crime prevention initiatives, including:

- Approximately \$19 million for a statewide law enforcement grant program that provided an allocation to every local and Tribal law enforcement agency in Wisconsin, enabling agencies to address the unique needs facing their communities, including training, recruitment bonuses, community policing needs, and technology investments;
- \$1 million for the Wisconsin Technical College System to support part-time police academy programs in Wisconsin;
- Nearly \$20 million to Milwaukee County and the city of Milwaukee for criminal justice system initiatives and community safety projects; and
- More than \$16 million toward reducing the pandemic-related backlog of criminal cases statewide.

Gov. Evers has also proposed commonsense community safety and gun safety measures in all four of the biennial budgets he has introduced to date. In addition to closing the loophole to prevent domestic abusers from possessing firearms, the governor's 2025-27 Executive Budget proposed the most robust and comprehensive gun safety reform efforts to date, including:

- Providing ongoing funding to make the Office of Violence Prevention a permanent office in state government;
- Investing \$66 million to support services for crime victims statewide and help critical victim service providers stay afloat after seeing significant recent reductions in federal funding under VOCA;
- Promoting and supporting the safe storage of firearms to prevent guns from getting into the hands of kids, people who may be at risk of harming

themselves, individuals who are prohibited from possessing firearms, and individuals who are a threat to others;

- Enacting “red flag” laws to give law enforcement and loved ones critical tools to help keep people safe;
- Creating a new program called the Self-Assigned Firearm Exclusion (SAFE) Program, which will help ensure folks who are in crisis have access to the resources needed to keep themselves and others safe;
- Requiring violent history checks for most firearm purchases;
- Requiring a waiting period between firearm purchases and possession; and
- Banning untraceable guns and certain firearm modification devices.

More information regarding Gov. Evers’ comprehensive plan to prevent gun violence and keep kids, families, and communities safe is available [here](#).