



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

March 28, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
P.O. Box 7863
Madison WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers:

The past two weeks have been difficult for everyone in Wisconsin. Lives have been upended and families worry about the impact of the coronavirus on their futures. We have consistently said that now is not the time to demonstrate partisan differences and have been in regular communication with you on behalf of our caucuses to offer ideas and strategies to help mitigate the current pandemic.

We appreciate you providing us with a copy of the bill drafted by your office which we forwarded to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau for analysis so we could begin our discussions this last Monday.

Over the past week, we have all had a similar goal in mind: get treatment and personal protective equipment (PPE) for those dealing directly with the disease and create flexibilities as you look for ways to meet the additional needs of those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The legislation you put forward asked for a minimum of \$750 million GPR, including giving the Department of Health Services an unlimited sum sufficient account for the current public health emergency or any declared in the future. As we are sure you are aware, our current general fund balance can't support that request, so we are very concerned about the impact on other vital parts of state government if we are not careful in the use of state dollars.

It is why every day this week when we spoke, we expressed a need to not convene the legislature until President Trump signed the CARES Act. We thought we all agreed that we needed to know what federal dollars would be at our disposal before spending significant sums from the state's general fund.

The CARES Act was signed into law last night and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau has confirmed we will receive \$2.2 billion, with \$1.9 billion coming directly to the state. While we wish circumstances were different so oversight was required, these new federal dollars do not appear to require any legislative oversight whatsoever. They are completely at the disposal of your administration to spend on a wide variety of items including ventilators, masks and PPE.

In our conversations this week, your staff explained you have intended to purchase these items but have delayed making the decision. After extensive discussions with Legislative Fiscal Bureau Director Bob Lang, we all understand that your administration has the wherewithal to make these necessary PPE purchases. We urge you to do that immediately and not delay. All vendors now know you have the full faith and credit of Wisconsin's general fund backing you as you negotiate these purchases with them.

Despite this fact, you are still asking us to appropriate a blank check for over \$500 million to allow you to make these purchases. Why can't we use federal funds to allow our own resources to be invested where federal dollars aren't planned to be utilized? As we said during our discussions today, the state does not have this money to give you unlimited sums, and furthermore, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, it is unnecessary. Between now and when the federal money comes, you will have the ability to transfer the necessary funds between accounts in order to make these purchases.

Again, we implore you. Please do not wait any longer to buy ventilators and masks. Do it now.

We look forward to working with you in the coming days as we negotiate the requests made by our members and your administration to deal with the current crisis. We hope you will remain open to discussing items that balance the needs of those in our healthcare and public health sectors as well as those who have been severely hurt economically because of the shutdown that you have ordered.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Scott Fitzgerald
Senate Majority Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin J. Vos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Robin J. Vos
Assembly Speaker