



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR  
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**President Roth’s Virtually Nonexistent State Senate**

(MADISON)—Today, Senator Tim Carpenter issued the following statement regarding the behavior of Senate President Roger Roth during the Extraordinary Session on April 15<sup>th</sup>:

“On Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, Wisconsin State Senate President Roger Roth quietly became the first Dictator of the Wisconsin State Senate.

“Essential Coronavirus relief legislation was passed in a vacuum, with elected State Senators banned from attending and participating that session in person. I showed up to work as usual to do my job, representing my 170,000 constituents.

“Senate Dictator Roger Roth ordered the doors locked, and that I be prohibited from entering the room for Senate session. Never mind that over the preceding month, I contacted Senator Roth three times saying that I will be attending session in person. I never received a response from President Roth.

“On April 13<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Committee on Organization voted along party lines to change the Senate Rules so that ‘The president shall determine which members may be physically present in the room from which the virtual session of the Senate is conducted.’ These rule changes were decided upon by 5 Senators, not with the consent of the full Senate. Only the Republican members of that committee, Senator Fitzgerald, Senator Roth, and Senator Feyen voted to allow Roth to dictate who gets to participate in a session of the State Senate.

“On the day of session, I arrived before the scheduled start time of 11:00am. Unbelievably, even while wearing a mask and gloves, and carrying a thermometer to prove that I had no fever, I was physically prevented from doing my job in attending session for the first time in 36 years.

“When Governor Evers called a Special Session to take place on April 4<sup>th</sup> to debate potential changes to the timing and procedures for the April 7<sup>th</sup> election, not a single Republican State Senator even bothered to show up for session, including President Roth. They ordered the Senate Chief Clerk to do their work for them and quash that special session, so that they could hide from the public while denying voters a safe election. I made sure to be there so that my constituents would be represented in the event that Republicans decided to do their jobs. Watching the gavel rise and fall, ending that important opportunity to protect the people of Wisconsin in a matter of seconds with only two Senators present, was one of the most disappointing moments that I could recall as a member of our State Legislature.

“The actions of the Republican Legislative Leadership over the past weeks: not holding session to pass relief measures until the last minute; refusing to meet when called to protect voters during the election; asking their allies on the Republican Controlled Wisconsin State Supreme Court to reject the Governor’s actions to protect voters—forcing hundreds of thousands of voters to go to the polls in person; and then

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barring their colleagues from voting in person or even speaking during a session of the Senate in order to protect their own health and save face are disgraceful. These people are not leaders, and I would never willingly put decisions about my or anyone else's health in their hands.

“There is a clan of State Senators that are demanding Governor Evers abandon the advice of the epidemiologists, virologists, and emergency management professionals of our state in crafting a strategic plan to combat the Coronavirus. These arrogant, anti-science Senators have decided to dump those experts' plan for a purely political, opportunistic electoral game. These Conservative Right Wing Republicans would happily destroy the State Senate just to achieve their shortsighted and partisan agenda.

“Roger Roth set that agenda in motion during the ‘virtual session’ on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

“By banning senators from attending in person, and relegating them to participating through a computer system through which he could completely ignore their attempts to speak and raise points of inquiry, he made himself Senate Dictator, abandoning the traditions of the Senate which was once considered the most deliberative body in our state.

“I will continue to fight to be heard as a Wisconsin Senator. I will never stand by as the drunk-with-power Senate Republicans deny my- and my colleagues' right to participate as members of the State Senate.”

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