



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Juneteenth is a Call to Action** *Senate Democrats Demand Action on Racial Inequities*

MADISON – Juneteenth is a day in which we celebrate the victories previous generations made towards freedom and equality, while also recognizing the need to improve opportunities for future generations. Wisconsin has the disturbing distinction of being ranked dead last in the nation for racial equality, having the worst racial disparities for infant mortality, as well as being third in the nation for racial inequalities in household income. As hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites of every color celebrate Juneteenth, Senate Democratic leaders are demanding Republicans in the majority make the commitment to work with the legislature’s Black Caucus and Governor Evers to take action and reform Wisconsin’s justice system, improve health outcomes and expand economic opportunities for communities of color.

“As elected leaders we cannot continue to hide when things get uncomfortable,” said Senate Democratic Leader Janet Bewley (D-Mason). “Systemic racism and discrimination is a crisis that permeates through our communities like a cancer and ignoring it only makes it worse. Change is long overdue and it is time the legislature take bold, meaningful and comprehensive steps to dismantle policies that have tipped the imbalances in our state. From incarceration to education, and health outcomes to economic opportunities, we cannot continue to hide from uncomfortable conversations or ignore the systemic racism and racial disparities that exist in our state. We ask that you work with us to address these issues. We may not all agree on every detail, but surely we can work together to find some common ground.”

“In order to live in a just society we must recognize the humanity and dignity of every person,” said Assistant Democratic Leader Janis Ringhand (D-Evansville). “Our county needs to end systematic racism, reduce barriers, and expand opportunities for people of color. Only then will we be able to build trust and move forward. Let us begin immediately and work together to make Wisconsin a better place to live for people of color.”

“Juneteenth is painfully significant in 2020, the year when George Floyd’s callous murder by a Minneapolis policeman aroused the entire world to protest not only police brutality but the widespread social injustice his murder represents,” said Democratic Caucus Chair Mark Miller (D-Monona). “Juneteenth celebrates the last day of slavery in the United States. Sadly, the brief period of economic and political flourishing for African Americans that followed the Civil War devolved into segregation, discrimination, Jim Crow and loss of political power through systemic voter suppression and intimidation. These racial inequities remain with us today resulting in black Americans getting poorer housing, poorer schools, poorer jobs, lower wages, poorer health, and disproportionate arrest, conviction and incarceration. I hope that Juneteenth, 2020, will be the point at which America moves from equality to justice.”

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