Wisconsin Safe Voting Plan

Mayors of Wisconsin's 5 Largest Cities Team Up with Nonpartisan Nonprofit to Invest in Safe Elections During COVID

Wisconsin - The mayors of Wisconsin's five largest cities announced today they have successfully secured a combined $6.3 million in nonprofit grants to fund the "Wisconsin Safe Voting Plan." The grants, awarded by the nonpartisan Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL), will help each municipality administer elections this year in the midst of the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

The Wisconsin spring election -- in which voters were subjected to exposure to a dangerous virus, and municipalities scrambled to conduct safe elections -- presented a cautionary tale of precisely how _not_ to run an election during an outbreak of a lethal disease.[1]

The national recession that accompanied the pandemic has now caused devastating budget gaps for municipalities across the country. State and local governments around the nation are now grappling with yawning and unexpected deficits, raising the serious prospect of deep and difficult cuts to core services.[2]

As a result, municipalities are struggling with how to conduct safe and accessible elections -- especially if as predicted a second wave of coronavirus erupts this fall. Already, several states are experiencing spikes in coronavirus cases as the first wave of COVID-19 continues to rage across the country. And according to the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* on 7/2/20 -- "the coronavirus is accelerating again in Wisconsin with 20% of the state's total cases having been reported in the last two weeks, state public health officials announced Thursday."[3]

To meet this extraordinary challenge, the cities of Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Racine and Kenosha have applied for grant funds from CTCL to create the "Wisconsin Safe Voting Plan" and support elections operations. This grant program will enable municipalities to prepare for and operate safe elections by investing in priorities that would otherwise be very challenging to accomplish -- such as securely opening an adequate number of voting sites; setting up drive-thru and drop box locations; providing PPE for poll workers; and recruiting and training a sufficient number of poll workers.

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[1] *https://twitter.com/wisconsinwatch/status/1275933511753641985?s=11*

[2] *https://twitter.com/compujeramey/status/1278331759822856192?s=12*

[3] *https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2020/07/02/twenty-percent-all-virus-cases-wisconsin-reported-last-two-weeks/5357805002/*

The "Wisconsin Safe Voting Plan" grant applications have been approved in full by CTCL and will soon be awarded to each municipality. Some of the jurisdictions may require approval from their respective city councils to accept the grants.

"The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global public health crisis, and seriously impaired the ability of local governments to administer safe and smooth elections," said **Racine Mayor Cory Mason. "**These grants will help each municipality make investments that will ensure smooth, safe and healthy elections in a time of a national health pandemic -- which each municipality otherwise would struggle to do while facing an intense budget shortfall."

"We have seen what can happen to elections in the midst of a dangerous pandemic -- long lines, limited locations, threatened exposure to a deadly disease, and voters concerned about going to the polls due to serious health fears," said **Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett**. "These resources will help us address these problems, and I thank the Center for Tech and Civic Life for making these important and wise investments."

"Through an extraordinary effort, Madison was able to pull off a safe election in April, but we spent hundreds of thousands of dollars we hadn't budgeted doing so," said **Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. "**As we have seen in Wisconsin and across the nation, COVID-19 is not gone; in fact, it's getting worse in some places. If we are going to meet our obligations as elected leaders to ensure the safe administration of elections during this pandemic, we have to think differently and bring in help where we can. These valuable resources will go a long way to running successful elections this year."

"The coronavirus pandemic has provided a stress test for our democratic institutions, including our elections, and we know we must do better," said **Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich.** "The support of the Center for Tech and Civic Life will enable us to ensure that all Green Bay citizens can exercise their right to vote safely and securely in August and November."

"These smart investments will allow us to increase safety without burdening taxpayers," said **Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian**. "This is exactly the kind of project that city governments need to pursue in the midst of a pandemic that is still threatening lives."

"As a representative of over 100 central city churches, I am proud to be a part of this citywide effort to create a safe and accessible voting process for November 2020," said **Reverend Greg Lewis, Executive Director of Souls to the Polls**. "The Black community has been hard hit by the COVID 19, I myself was hospitalized and we have lost hundreds of Black lives to this virus. It is literally a matter of life and death that our people can vote without risking our health."

The **Center for Tech and Civic Life** is a nationally-recognized, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of civic technologists, trainers, researchers, election administration and data experts working to help modernize U.S. elections. CTCL connects election officials with guidance, expertise, tools, and trainings so they can best serve their communities, and ensure that elections are more professional, safe, and secure. CTCL works with the federal government, as well as local and state governments of all sizes across the nation and regardless of partisanship to highlight best practices, create easy-to-use resources for administrators, and develop infrastructure to better operate elections. [4]

"This year, election departments are facing an unprecedented challenge of administering safe and secure elections that provide healthy voting options to the public," said **Center for Tech and Civic Life Executive Director Tiana Epps-Johnson**. "To meet this challenge, CTCL is providing support to Wisconsin election officials so no voter is required to

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[4] *https://www.techandciviclife.org/*

make a choice between their health and their ability to vote. From ensuring that polling places are open and following the latest public health guidelines, to providing options for voters to easily and securely return absentee ballots, to making certain that the incredible people who step up to serve as poll workers are protected and well compensated for their service, we're proud to partner with the five largest cities in Wisconsin to deliver a smooth voting process that inspires confidence."

SUMMARY OF GRANTS

Total by Municipality
- City of Milwaukee: $2,154,500
- City of Madison: $1,271,788
- City of Green Bay: $1,093,400
- City of Kenosha: $862,779
- City of Racine: $942,100

Total by Use
- Support Early In-Person Voting and Vote by Mail: $2,572,839
  - *Expand the number of in-person Early Voting sites (Including Curbside Voting).*
  - *Provide assistance to help voters comply with absentee ballot requests and certification requirements.*
  - *Utilize secure drop-boxes to facilitate return of absentee ballots.*
  - *Deploy additional staff and/or technology improvements to expedite and improve accuracy of absentee ballot processing.*
- Launch Poll Worker Recruitment, Training & Safety Efforts: $1,810,028
  - *Recruit and hire a sufficient number of poll workers and inspectors to ensure poll sites properly staffed during virus outbreak, utilizing hazard pay where required.*
  - *Provide voting facilities with funds to compensate for increased site cleaning and sanitization costs. Provide updated training for current and new poll workers administering elections in midst of pandemic.*
- Ensure Safe, Efficient Election Day Administration: $876,700
  - *Procure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and personal disinfectant to protect election officials and voters from coronavirus.*
  - *Support and expand drive-thru voting on election day, including covering additional unbudgeted expenses for signage, tents, traffic control, and safety measures.*
- Expand Voter Education & Outreach Efforts: $1,065,000
  - *Outreach to remind voters to verify and update their address, or other voter registration information, prior to the election.*

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