

## Wisconsin's Response to Coronavirus

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31  
Wednesday, 15 April 2020 10:14

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/tony-evers-talks-2u-s5.jpg>



***Since declaring a public health emergency for the state, Governor Tony Evers has introduced two COVID-19 relief packages and issued numerous emergency orders to slow the spread of COVID-19.***

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EAU CLAIRE, WI - As we near the end of a month while under the COVID-19 public health emergency, I thought of the steps Governor Tony Evers has taken to keep Wisconsinites safe. Keeping in mind how much pressure the Governor has been under both personally and politically, it seems we ought to commend him for his steadfast leadership and resolve. Governor Evers understands the serious responsibility in issuing the “Safer at Home” order – he understands these measures will protect Wisconsinites, but they’re not helping win friends or votes. These difficult decisions must be made knowing that.

So let’s walk through some steps Governor Evers has taken so far.

March 12 – Governor Evers declared a public health emergency in Wisconsin. As a result, he issued 23 emergency orders, which are intended to streamline responses from state agencies during the public health emergency to help Wisconsinites.

March 21 – Governor Evers shared a COVID-19 policy package with legislative leaders to provide immediate and long-term relief to Wisconsin residents affected by the COVID-19

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pandemic. The proposal includes measures to support local public health agencies; expand telehealth coverage; prohibit surprise medical billing and cover the cost of testing and treatment related to COVID-19; reform election laws; repeal the one week waiting period to receive Unemployment benefits; help essential workers cover childcare costs; and more.



March 21 – On behalf of Governor Evers' request, the Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for additional personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gowns, gloves and face shields. On March 31, Wisconsin received PPE from the Strategic National Stockpile for healthcare workers.

March 26 – Governor Evers launched the PPE Buy-back Program to encourage businesses and organizations to sell PPE to the state in a continued effort to collect more supplies for healthcare workers.

March 24 – Governor Evers issued the "Safer at Home" order in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.

March 30 – Governor Evers announced a new public-private partnership with Wisconsin businesses to increase COVID-19 testing capacity in the state.

March 31 – Governor Evers requested a major disaster declaration for Wisconsin. This would help all 72 counties and the state's federally recognized tribes receive additional resources in response to COVID-19, including Direct and Public Assistance, Hazard Mitigation, Crisis Counseling, Community Disaster Loans and Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Program. Wisconsin was later granted this federal disaster declaration on April 4.

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April 1 – Governor Evers introduced a second legislative package. This proposal included additional measures for Wisconsin residents during this difficult time, such as support for small businesses and workers; aid for emergency food banks; broadband expansion efforts; vaccination coverage to SeniorCare members; utility assistance for families; and more.

April 3 – Governor Evers signed Executive Order #73, calling for a special session to take up changes to the spring election to be held on Saturday, April 4. The next day, Republican leaders gavelled in and out within minutes, rejecting changes be made to protect voters and election workers.

April 6 – One day before the spring election, Governor Evers signed Executive Order #74 to suspend in-person voting for the April 7th Election until June 2020. He called on the Legislature to meet in Special Session to address the election date; however, Republican leaders chose not to meet. Later that day, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled the April 7 election to go on, as planned, against the guidance of health experts.



Take note of what is missing throughout this process: any action from the Republican-led Legislature. Republicans still haven't taken action on Governor Evers' COVID-19 relief proposals, introduced more than 3 weeks ago. While Republican leaders have marked Governor Evers as the "bad cop" they've sat on their hands throughout the first month, doing nothing to help Wisconsin during this crisis. Ironical, since they went to so much trouble to take power out of the Governor's hands during the 2018 Lame Duck Session so they could be the decision makers.

So far the Republican leaders only know how to stand in the way and criticize Governor Evers' swift response. That is not leadership. I hope by the time you read this, Republicans will have finally joined Governor Evers in making Wisconsin safer.