



# Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

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October 23, 2020

Via Electronic Mail Only

Dear Mr. Evers:

Please find attached the records in response to your April 10, 2020 request for:

1. Any assessments, analyses, models, or projections produced by or provided to the Office of the Governor regarding the possible public health outcomes of conducting the April 7, 2020 elections in light of the coronavirus emergency, including but not limited to regarding: possible increases in morbidity or mortality stemming from interpersonal contact between voters and/or poll workers; any municipalities or populations at particular risk of infection; the relative risks of requiring in-person voting compared to alternative methods; or the relative risks of conducting elections on April 7 compared to on a later date.
2. Any assessments, analyses, models, or projections produced by or provided to the Office of the Governor concerning the possible effects of the coronavirus emergency on voter turnout, including but not limited to regarding: any anticipated change in turnout due to public concern about contagion; any change in participation rate resulting from use of absentee ballots, whether due to utilization rates, available supplies, or submission or processing times; or long lines or confusion caused by polling place closures or consolidation.

We interpreted your request to *not* include general requests for action regarding the Spring Election that came in from public interest organizations (i.e. disability rights organizations or voter rights organizations), requests from local elected officials (including clerks writing to express concern over a poll worker shortage), or constituents. While all of these types of contact might reference publicly discussed anticipated public health outcomes or voter turnout projections/theories related to the Spring 2020 election, we did not think that was an “assessment[], analys[is], model[], or projection[]” as contemplated by your request. If that interpretation is incorrect, please let us know.

Sincerely,  
Office of Legal Counsel



Election Commission

**Commissioners**  
Stephanie Findley  
Carmen Cabrera  
Jess Ripp

**Executive Director**  
Neil V. Albrecht

April 3, 2020

TO: Meagan Wolfe, Administrator, Wisconsin Elections Commission  
Dean Knudson, Chair, Wisconsin Elections Commission  
Commission Members, Wisconsin Elections Commission

FROM: Neil Albrecht, Executive Director  
City of Milwaukee Election Commission

RE: City of Milwaukee April 7 Polling Place Plan

### City of Milwaukee Election Day Operation Plan

#### Background

The City of Milwaukee Election Commission faces serious challenges due to the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak. These challenges began to surface in early March, shortly after the February 18, 2020 Spring Election, and continue to evolve along with the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has put the Election Commission in an unprecedented situation. In fact, the Election Commission has adapted and adjusted its standard Election Day operating procedures for the first time in its history in accordance with COVID-19 public health emergency declarations and executive orders. This plan takes into consideration specific federal, state and local actions in sequential date order.

- March 12, 2020: Executive Order #72 - Proclamation by Wisconsin State Governor Tony Evers Declaring a Public Health Emergency in Response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus
- March 13, 2020: Proclamation by U. S. President Donald J. Trump Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak
- March 23, 2020: City of Milwaukee Stay At Home Order - Directed by Mayor Tom Barrett and Dr. Jeanette Kowalik, Commissioner, City of Milwaukee Health Department [Effective March 25, 2020 – Indefinite]
- March 24, 2020: State of Wisconsin Emergency Order #12 Safer At Home Order - Directed by Governor Tony Evers and executed by Andrea Palm, Secretary Designee, Department of Health Services, State of Wisconsin [Effective March 25, 2020 – April 24, 2020]

Despite the extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak, the City of Milwaukee Election Commission remains fully committed to conducting the 2020 Spring Election and Presidential Primary on April 7, 2020 in a manner that protects public health and ensures the greatest positive impact possible on Milwaukee voters, but makes this commitment with substantial concern.



### *Projected Turnout*

In the April 2016 Presidential Primary, 167,765 Milwaukee residents voted in the Spring Election and Presidential Primary, up from 84,641 in 2012. The growing concerns and impact of COVID-19 on voter turnout is largely uncharted and unpredictable. However, the Election Commission's best estimate is that turnout for the election could be as low as 100,000 voters or as high as 120,000 voters.

Under normal circumstances, the City of Milwaukee would operate 180 neighborhood-based voting sites. Each of the city's 327 voting wards are assigned to a voting site, with some sites serving single wards, some serving two wards and some three. Turnout per voting site in a Presidential Primary can vary widely from between 250 voters to 2,000 voters. Sites with high turnout are often challenged by high volumes of voters leading to long lines and problematic wait times.

As of April 2, 81,566 voters have submitted absentee ballot requests. With an April 2 deadline for submitting a request, the department estimates that a total of 85,000 city residents will submit requests for by-mail ballots. Based on past elections and current considerations, the department estimates that 95% - or 80,750 - of absentee voters will return their ballots. An additional 2,468 have voted in-person absentee or "drive-up" voting. The department estimates that 7,500 total will in-person absentee vote by the Sunday, April 5 deadline. Between by-mail absentee and in-person absentee, an estimated 88,250 Milwaukee residents will have cast their ballot prior to Election Day. Assuming 110,000 voters, this would indicate the possibility of 21,750 Election Day voters in the city.

### *Election Worker Recruitment and Assignment*

Maintaining trained election workers has presented the greatest challenge to the department in anticipation of operating voting sites on Election Day. The department's core election worker staff traditionally hovers around 1,400 workers. Planned recruitment efforts would have increased that number to 1,800 or higher in anticipation of the high turnout primary. Despite recruitment efforts that included outreach to workplaces, colleges and universities, community organizations and the public, the number of confirmed workers currently stands at less than 300, with additional workers cancelling daily as confirmed COVID-19 cases multiply daily. In this last week before the election, the Governor's office made an appeal to state employees to serve as election workers which brought an influx of approximately 12 workers. Additionally, while still largely undefined, it would appear that the city will receive the support of an uncertain number of members from the National Guard. Ultimately, the continued instability and uncertainty of site staffing has emerged as the greatest challenge toward planning and administering this election.

Undoubtedly, insufficient staffing numbers and the lack of experienced election workers will have a two-fold effect:

- **There is significant risk that the integrity of the election will be compromised. Sites that are short-staffed cannot operate effectively or at the level of accuracy and transparency that is necessary to the administration of an election. This presents a significant risk and liability to the city and to the state in the administration of this critical and nationally visible election. In the event of a recount, there is a heightened risk that errors made by election workers could result in the disqualifications of votes and the disenfranchisement of members of the public.**

- **There is a heightened risk that crowds of voters will become unmanageable and safety and public health precautions will become compromised. The city witnessed these types of occurrences during its administration of in-person absentee voting during the week of March 16. Members of the public, often unintentionally, disregarded social distancing rules and numerous other precautions during the voting process. Election workers are trained to facilitate voting and often lack the level of experience necessary to additionally manage public health issues during voting. The actions of members of the public created a level of risk that was so substantial to election workers and other members of the public that the city was compelled to terminate in-person voting sites and later move to a model of drive-up in-person absentee voting.**

In order to ensure some level of sufficient staffing at voting sites, the department has been forced to drastically consolidate voting sites into voting centers, with each center representing three aldermanic districts. This volume of voters at a single site is unprecedented in Milwaukee.

#### *Assignment of Voting Centers*

Aldermanic Districts \*1, 3 and 6 will be voting at Riverside High School, 1615 E. Locust Street

- ✓ 65 wards will vote at this site

Aldermanic Districts 2, 5 and 9 will be voting at Marshall High School, 4141 N. 64<sup>th</sup> Street

- ✓ 62 wards will vote at this site

Aldermanic Districts \*4, 12 and 14 will be voting at South Division High School, 1515 W. Lapham Blvd.

- ✓ 65 wards will vote at this site

Aldermanic Districts \*7, 10, and 15 will be voting at Washington High School, 2525 N. Sherman Blvd.

- ✓ 71 wards will vote at this site

Aldermanic Districts 8, 11, and 13 will be voting at Hamilton High School, 6215 W. Warnimont Ave

- ✓ 64 wards will vote at this site

#### *Anticipated Election Day Turnout and Demographics*

A preliminary review of absentee voting numbers shows that the more economically stable districts in the city have provided the greatest volume of absentee requests. For most, the process of requesting an absentee ballot requires access to the internet, the ability to upload an image of a photo ID, and the ability to easily navigate the myvote.wi.gov website. It is clear that this process presents a much greater challenge to residents in the city's more economically challenged neighborhoods that include aldermanic districts 1, 2, 6, 7 and 15. As a result, Election Day turnout will not be evenly distributed among the five voting centers, but will instead be disproportionately high at Washington High School and Riverside High School. Washington High School is centrally located in the Sherman Park neighborhood, an area of largely African American residents. This area has also been identified as a "hot spot" of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Milwaukee.

#### **Voting Center Operations**

Staffing Needs (based entirely on current staffing availability of <300 election workers versus practical design)

- Minimum 80-100 workers per site, with at least 50% of those assigned having previous election work experience. Specifically, per site:
  - 20 people with WisVote experience to check in registered voters
    - Must have WisVote log-in credentials and cybersecurity training
  - 10 ballot runners
  - 15-20 greeters/crowd control (inside/outside)
  - 4-6 curbside voting administrators
  - 25 registrars
  - 5 registration ballot runners
  - 5 machine attendants

It is important to note that a high turnout two- or three-ward voting site in the City of Milwaukee during a Presidential Primary would have upwards of 20-25 assigned, trained and experienced workers. This model is build around available staff and not best practices for operating a voter center serving this magnitude of voters.

Additional Staffing:

- Law enforcement
- Health Department
- IT support
- Crowd Control
- Parking Management

## **Voting Room Operations**

### Registered Voters

Due to the volume of voters representing 60+ different reporting units, it is not possible to operate using poll books. Subsequently, each voter center will operate somewhat similarly to the city's in-person absentee voting sites, where voters are "checked in" using WisVote, the statewide voter registration database.

- 8-10 computer workstations with 1 printer per 2 stations
  - Computers must have Internet access
  - Shared printers
- ITMD to secure access to MPS Wi Fi
- Prints registration record (similar to poll book listing) that voter signs
- The printed record, with highlighted ward information, is taken by voter to the ballot station where a ballot is issued
- Note: Voter numbers will be assigned by WisVote, but a physical voter number will not be issued to the voter
- Need MHD guidance on photo ID procedure

### Ballot Station

- Each site will have ward ballots for between 62 and 70 wards.
- Ballots will be maintained on secure (restricted public access) and staffed ballot tables

- Ballot runners collect will the registration record, confirm ward and issue ballot

#### Voter Registration

- Based on previous election averaging, approximately 20% or 1 in 5 of the voters at each site will also need to register. This number will be higher in the more economically challenged areas of the city due the transient nature of people in poverty, and lesser in the more economically stable areas.
- 20 – 25 designated registration tables, each staffed by a registrar
- Assigned registration team leads
- Traditional method of voter registration with proof of residence
  - Supplemental forms to be used for all wards without ward segregation
  - Tablets used to identify voter ward, voting guides to determine correct location
- Runner to secure ballot

#### Curbside Voting

- By state law, Election Day polling places are required to offer a curbside voting option to members of the public unable to enter a voting room due to, for example, disability or age.
- During a curbside vote, election workers represent the voter by confirming their registration status (or registering them) and bring a ballot and voting supplies to their vehicle.
- Due to public concern over the health risk of entering a voting site and numerous other scenarios, the department anticipates an extraordinarily high volume of curbside voters.
- The curbside voting is very laborious, time consuming and can be disruptive to the flow of a voting room. There is also a potential of abuse from persons looking to avoid standing in line.

#### Voting Booths

- Each center will receive 40 booths
- Pens and booths to be disinfected after each use

#### Voting Machines

8 DS200 voting machines per site programmed to accept ballots from any ward, but with signage dividing wards (to help with ballot sorting)

- 3-4 ExpressVotes for accessibility and potential ballot shortages

#### Misc. Supplies

- 40 voting booths
- Tables and chairs
- Ballots for all assigned wards
- Tape, extension cords, pens, all other supplies
- Signs, notices and & bulletin boards

#### Public Health

- Review and implement CDC guidelines around voting and COVID-19 (see below)

- Secure supplies (sanitizer, gloves, masks, disinfectants) from MHD and County
- Use tape to mark social distancing in lines
- Review plan with Milwaukee Health Department/Wisconsin Elections Commission
- Limit the number of people in voting room, establish plan for flow of room, lines, including outside of the building

#### Other Considerations

- Training and assignment of election workers
- Where Do I Vote? WisVote - pushing information out to public
- Observer areas
- Tallying write-in votes
- Reconciling the election
- Movers for central count / voting centers – how and when?

#### Voting Center Concerns:

- ❖ Health risk of a community gathering to election workers and the public
- ❖ Compliance with health precautions in a chaotic setting
- ❖ Decimation of election worker staff
- ❖ Lack of experience of newly recruited workers, including potential National Guard
- ❖ Unprecedented volume of voters at a single site
- ❖ Unpredictability of turnout
- ❖ Confusion of operating a single site serving 62+ individual reporting units
- ❖ The potential for a contagion incident

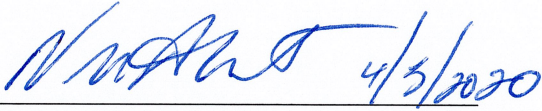
#### Central Count Processing of Absentee Ballots

In addition to voting centers, the city will be running a central count of absentee ballots on Election Day. This process will occur in an 80,000 sq. ft. facility, which will segregate workers into “pods” to allow for social distancing and the implementation of other precautions. The anticipated volume of ballots (potentially as high as 80,000, depending on return rates) will be significant. The city owns two high-speed ballot processors (ES&S DS850s) and has leased two additional. Additional high speed processors were requested from ES&S but are unavailable. In order to achieve a timely processing of absentee ballots, the city has recruited and assigned 300 workers to assist with the process, most of whom are city employees.

#### Election Canvass and Reconciliation

**As noted in the *election worker staffing* section of this plan, concerns about adequate levels of staffing are paramount. The City of Milwaukee has never, in its history, facilitated voting at a polling place that included more than four wards. Voting Centers will operate with between 62 and 70 wards. This type of voting model requires the development and implementation of entirely new sets of processes, operating procedures and training curriculum. The probability of error is dangerously high, including errors that could easily compromise the integrity of the election and lead to a distrust of election results and election outcomes. National experiences should inform the State of Wisconsin**

that polling places that are overwhelmed and insufficiently staffed severely compromise the integrity of the election and lead to costly recounts, legal disputes and an erosion of public confidence.

 4/3/2020


Neil Albrecht, Executive Director

City of Milwaukee Election Commission



## **Actions for elections officials in advance and on Election Day**

### **Preventive actions polling workers can take**

- **Stay at home if you have fever, respiratory symptoms, or believe you are sick**
- **Practice hand hygiene frequently:** wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces:** including tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- **Disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated with germs after cleaning:** A list of products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims  is available. Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against the virus that causes COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, use of personal protective equipment).
- **Clean and disinfect voting-associated equipment (e.g., voting machines, laptops, tablets, keyboards) routinely.** Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
  - Consult with the voting machine manufacturer for guidance on appropriate disinfection products for voting machines and associated electronics.
  - Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
  - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to clean voting machine buttons and touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

### **Preventive action polling stations workers can take for themselves and the general public**

Based on available data, the most important measures to prevent transmission of viruses in crowded public areas include careful and consistent cleaning of one's hands. Therefore:

- **Ensure bathrooms at the polling station are supplied adequately with soap, water, and drying materials so visitors and staff can wash their hands..**
- **Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol** for use before or after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. Consider placing the alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as registration desks and exits.
- **Incorporate social distancing strategies, as feasible.** Social distancing strategies increase the space between individuals and decrease the frequency of contact among individuals to reduce the risk of spreading a disease. Keeping individuals at least 6 feet apart is ideal based on what is known about COVID-19. If this is not feasible, efforts should be made to keep individuals as far

apart as is practical. Feasibility of strategies will depend on the space available in the polling station and the number of voters who arrive at one time. Polling station workers can:

- Increase distance between voting booths.
- Limit nonessential visitors. For example, poll workers should be encouraged not to bring children, grandchildren, etc. with them as they work the polls.
- Remind voters upon arrival to try to leave space between themselves and others. Encourage voters to stay 6 feet apart if feasible. Polling places may provide signs to help voters and workers remember this.
- Discourage voters and workers from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Include this reminder on signs about social distancing.

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 4, 2020

TO: State of Wisconsin Legislators

FROM: Local Public Health Officers representing many communities across the State of Wisconsin

SUBJECT: **April 7<sup>th</sup> election and COVID-19: Urgent need to postpone election and promote mail-in ballots**

**We strongly recommend that the April 7 election in Wisconsin be postponed, possibly to June 2<sup>nd</sup> and mail-in voting continues to be allowed until the date of the postponed election. This is a statewide election and we need a statewide solution to the real risk posed by an in-person election on April 7<sup>th</sup>. While the challenges are differentially experienced across the state the public health risk posed is statewide and significant.**

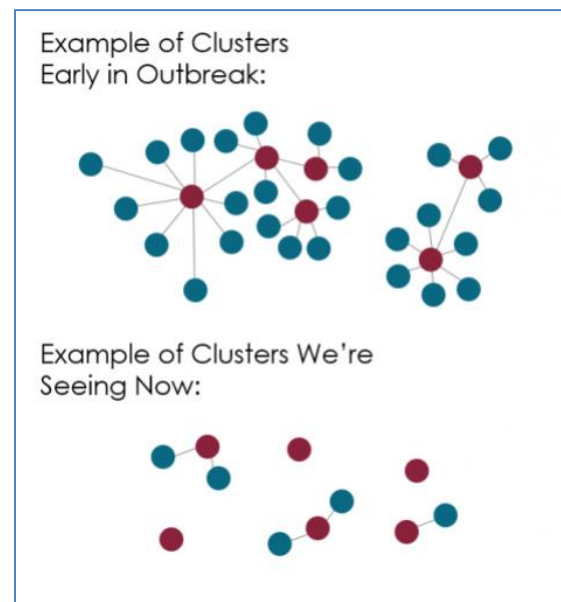
The in-person elections scheduled for April 7<sup>th</sup> present a serious challenge to controlling the spread of COVID-19. In absence of a vaccine or cure, our public health tools to combat this epidemic are few: **preventing exposure** to the virus is the best way to prevent illness, and **flattening the curve** of cases that are occurring is the best way to prevent exceeding the capacity of our health care system. Hosting an in-person election that would promote gathering of people throughout the state is in direct conflict with critical steps the state has taken, through closures and iterations of Safer at Home orders, to require social distancing to protect its population.

Every day, Public Health Nurses throughout the state interview people who test positive—we do this primarily to understand with whom they have been in contact so that we can intervene with contacts to prevent further spread. As social distancing orders were strengthened, the size of our contact investigations will decrease over time. This means that the number of contacts someone has looks very differently compared to even a few weeks ago.

Rather than entire workplaces or restaurants needing follow-up, it is more common now for someone newly diagnosed to name only household contacts. At this point in the progression of illness of COVID-19 in WI, an in-person election has the potential to reverse this

progress by expanding the network of contacts surrounding a person who is asymptomatic but contagious. Our case counts have been increasing steadily—but not exponentially—since mid-March.

**Holding elections is a walk back to the fragile, but effective, system of social distancing we have established in Wisconsin and a risk we should not willingly take.**



In addition to the public health risk of holding in-person elections, the strain on polling logistics is significant. Across the state, jurisdictions do not have enough poll workers needed to support the election. The number of polling locations across the state are going down which puts people in closer contact with each other. Communities of all sizes across the state are in similar situations. The engine of polling infrastructure is traditionally powered by older adults. People aged 65 and older are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Poll workers are often adults over 60, and many are understandably cancelling the shifts they have signed up for. Shifting to a younger demographic of poll workers does not offset risk. Younger people are more likely to have mild symptoms and may not even be aware they are infected with COVID-19, so having poll workers from this age group still poses a significant risk of transmission to voters, particularly if adequate safety materials are unable to be obtained due to national and global shortages.

Polling places across the state are scrambling to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, goggles, and gloves, are even considering fabricating plastic face shields and plexiglass barriers to protect both poll workers and voters from interfacing directly with each other. Some are making sure each polling location can accommodate curbside voting to the extent possible, and supplying each polling station team with hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, and gloves. Utilization of PPE in this way further challenges our already low supply and has the potential to compromise the ability of our healthcare partners to have adequate supply of PPE to care for those in their service.

Everyone is stressing the importance of maintaining at least 6 feet between poll workers and between voters in line to obtain ballots. Everyone is doing all they can to promote absentee voting and to keep up with the absentee requests, Clerk's staff are working around the clock and foregoing sleep to support election preparation, which can be detrimental to their own immune systems. And, they're receiving hundreds of calls from frustrated voters—mostly older adults without the technological capacity to request absentee ballots on-line—who feel disenfranchised, as if they have to make a choice between obeying public health advice to stay safe at home and going to the polls on April 7 to vote. **Instead, mailing ballots to every Wisconsin resident and extending the election deadline is the urgent step that we should continue to take now.** This is both an act of public health best practice as well as a preservation of civic engagement.

Wisconsin has been a leader at enacting statewide public health interventions throughout this epidemic. While it took other states critical time to restrict gatherings to 50 people, Wisconsin implemented this restriction early—merely days after reaching 20 cases (*Figure 1*).

# ACTIONS: Restrict gatherings to 50

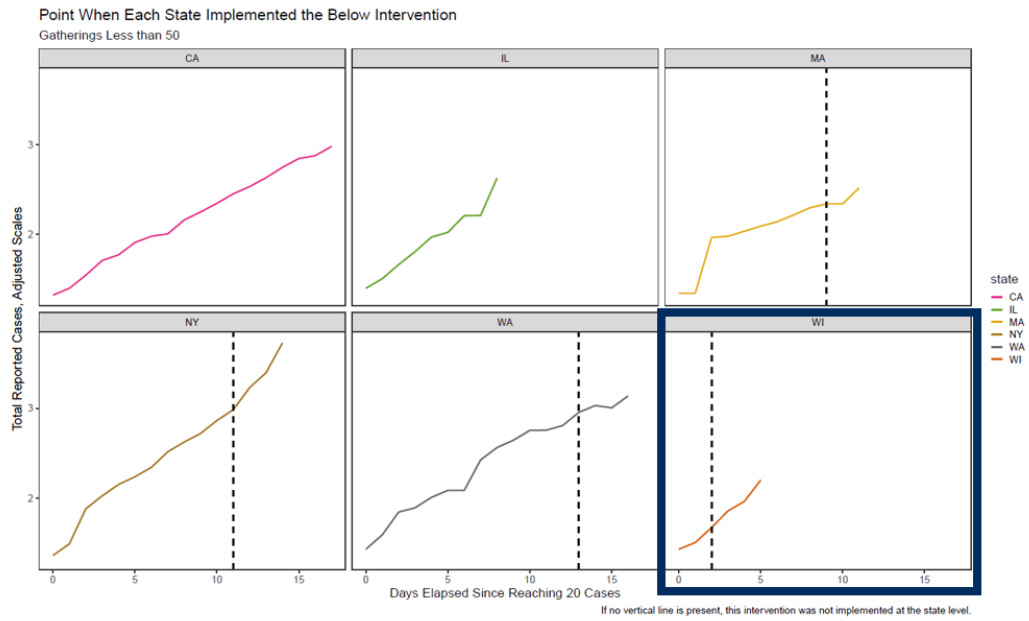


Figure 1: Timeline of state orders restricting gatherings to 50 people or less (Wisconsin in blue box)

Compared to other states, Wisconsin was also a leader in school (Figure 2) and restaurant (Figure 3) closures.

# ACTIONS: School closure

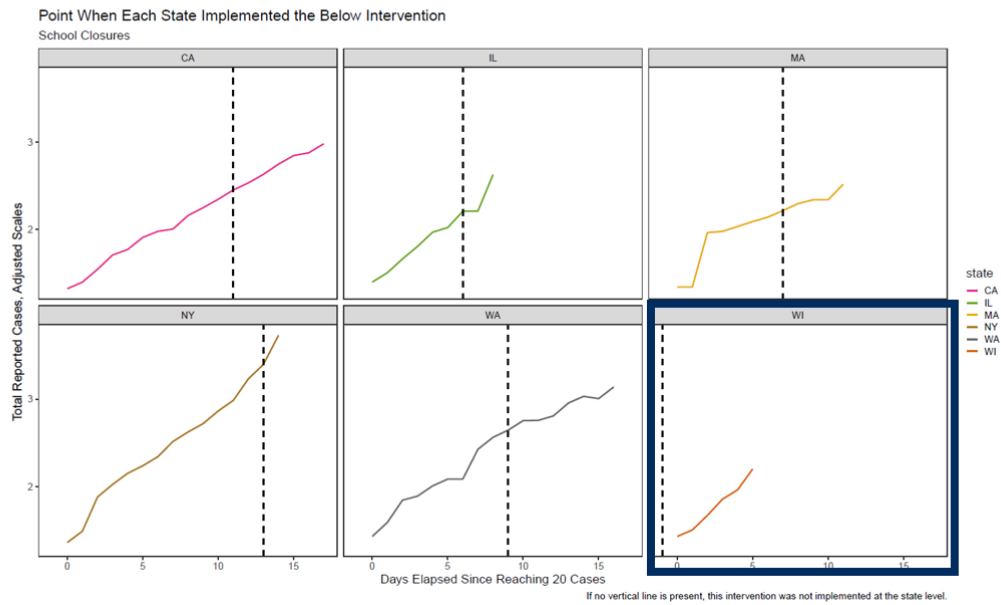


Figure 2: Timeline of state orders closing school (Wisconsin in blue box)

# ACTIONS: Restaurant closure

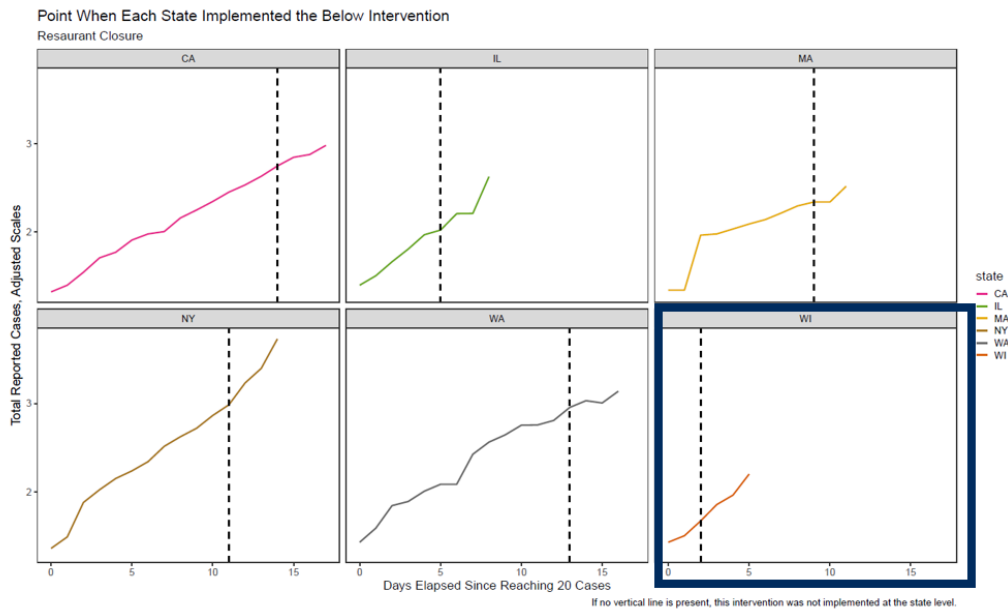


Figure 3 Timeline of state orders closing restaurants (Wisconsin in blue box)

When it comes to elections, Wisconsin would be a significant outlier if it hosted an in-person election on the scheduled date of April 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Election Days for States that Did Not Postpone Their Election

The red line is the original election date. If postponed, the black vertical line is the new election date.

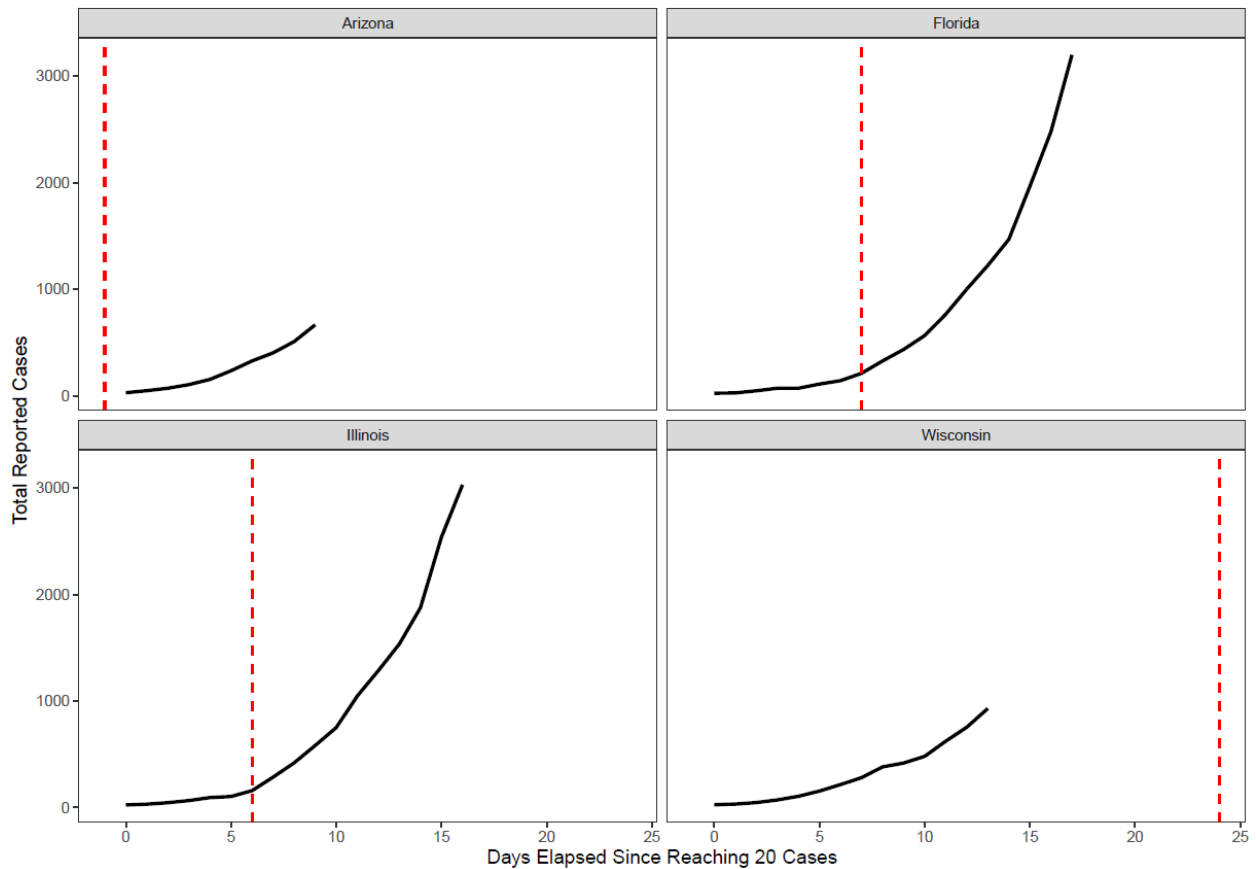


Figure 4: Election dates for states that did not postpone their election<sup>1,2</sup>

Three other states with primaries after the start of the epidemic (March 17th) did not postpone their elections. Illinois, Florida, and Arizona went forward with their primary elections, but did so far earlier in the epidemic (6 days past 20 cases, 7 days past 20 cases, and 0 days past 20 cases respectively) and had far fewer cases and less community spread (*Figure 4*). On March 17 when they voted, Illinois had 159 confirmed cases of COVID-19, Florida had 210 confirmed cases, and Arizona had 20 confirmed cases. Wisconsin had 1,112 cases as of March 29th, which will only increase before the scheduled election on April 7<sup>th</sup>. **Wisconsin’s election is planned to take place 24 days after we reached 20 confirmed cases—putting Wisconsin out of alignment with election practices actively being implemented across the country.**

<sup>1</sup> Election dates sourced from <https://www.nytimes.com/article/2020-campaign-primary-calendar-coronavirus.html>

<sup>2</sup> State COVID-19 data sourced from <https://github.com/nytimes/covid-19-data>

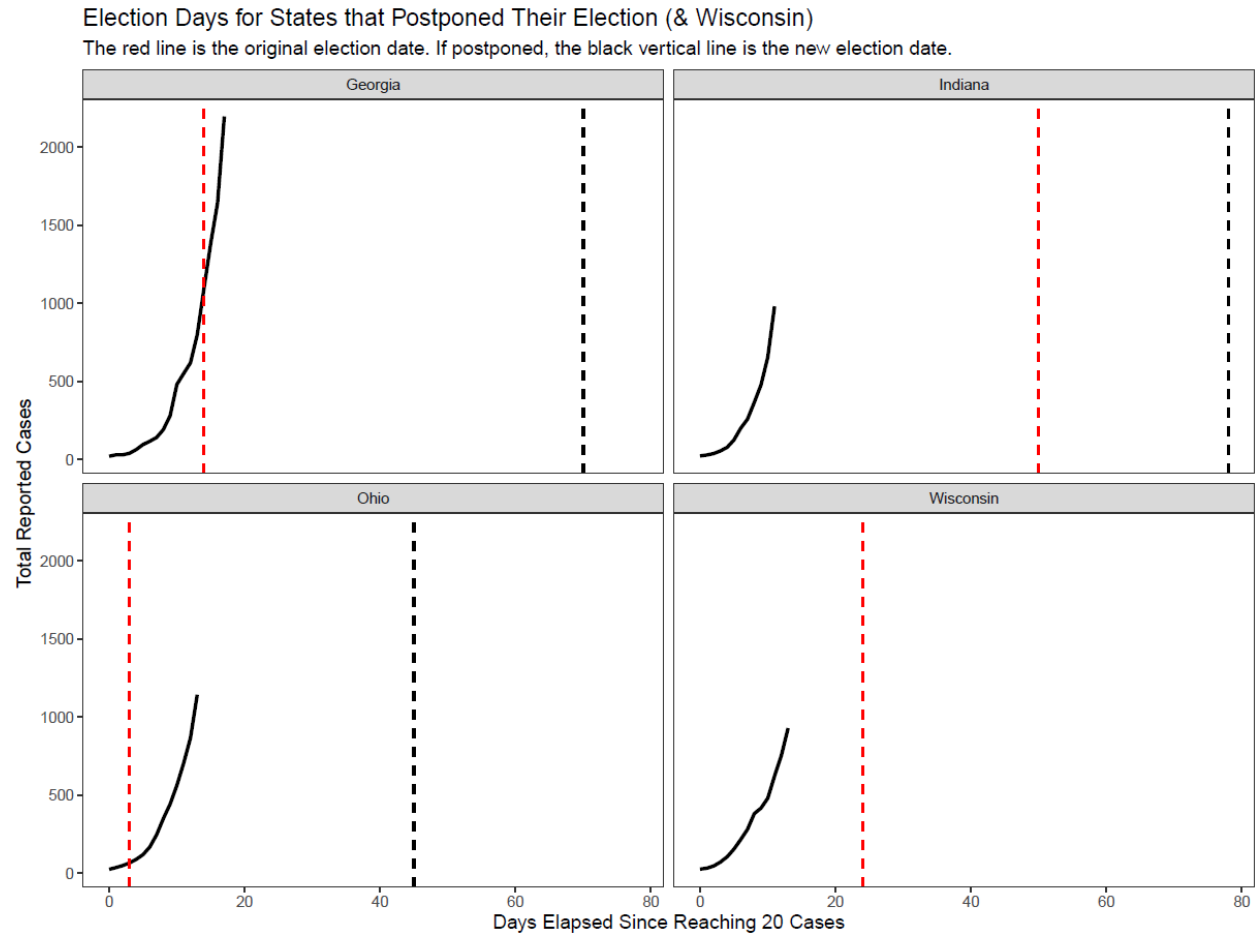


Figure 5: Election days for states that postponed their election<sup>3,4</sup>

Georgia, Ohio, and Indiana are examples of states (out of a total of 14 states) that postponed their primary elections (Figure 5). Georgia’s election was originally scheduled for March 24th, 14 days after they reached 20 cases, when their confirmed case count was 1,094. Ohio’s election was originally scheduled for March 17th, three days after they reached 20 cases, when their confirmed case count was 67. Both states chose to postpone their elections, scheduled earlier than Wisconsin’s, when they had fewer cases than Wisconsin currently does. Because these states had less information when making the decision, it is possible that they will further postpone. Indiana’s election was originally scheduled for

<sup>3</sup> Election dates sourced from <https://www.nytimes.com/article/2020-campaign-primary-calendar-coronavirus.html>

<sup>4</sup> State COVID-19 data sourced from <https://github.com/nytimes/covid-19-data>



May 5th, and they postponed it to June 2nd; Indiana had 982 cases as of March 27th. Indiana is an example of a state that postponed an election originally later than Wisconsin's, and other states that have done the same include Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and New York.

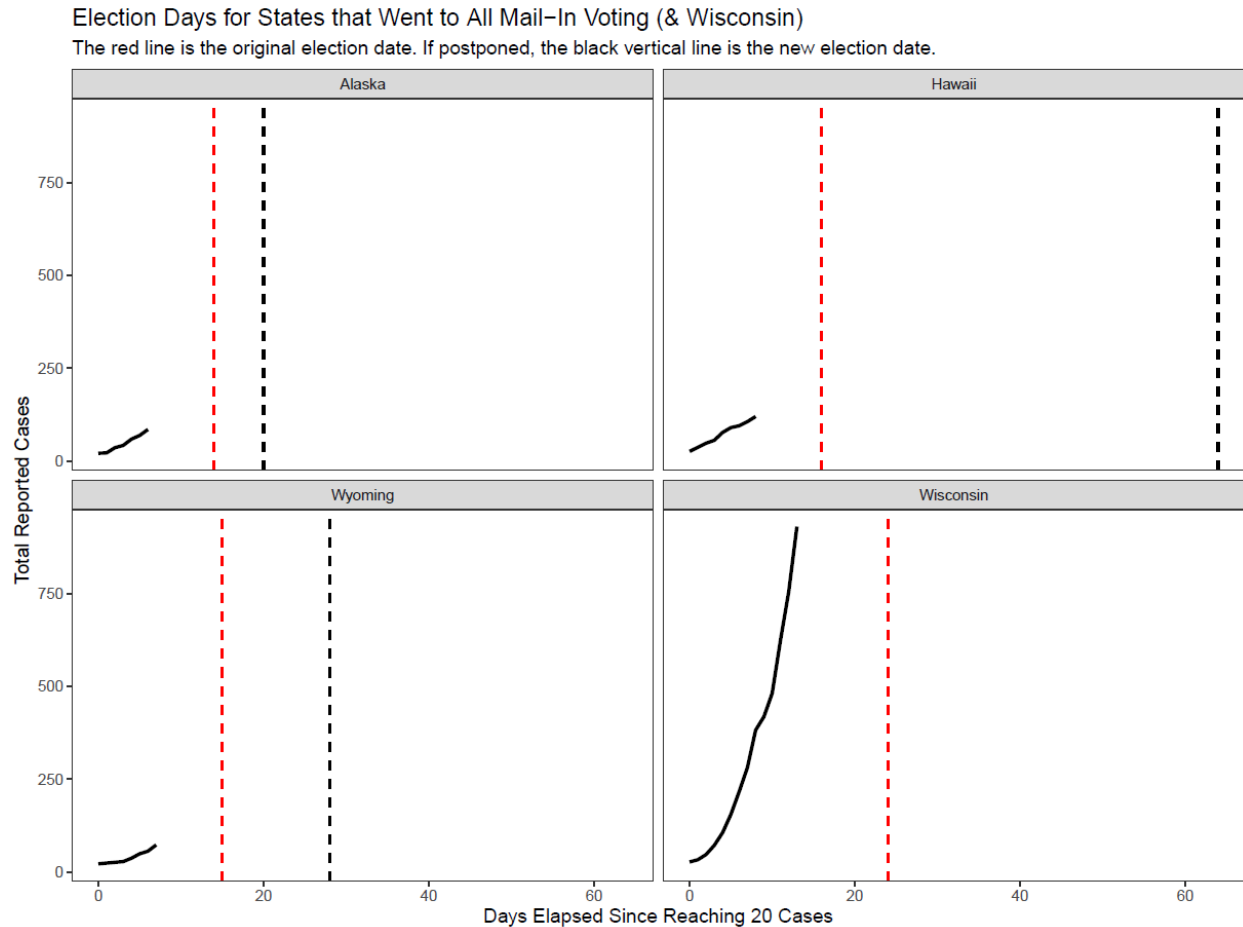


Figure 6: Election days for states that went to all mail-in voting<sup>5,6</sup>

Alaska, Hawaii, and Wyoming went to all mail-in voting in their primary elections (Figure 6). Each of these states chose to do so early in their epidemics, when case counts were low. In each case, the states paired the choice to go to mail-in ballots with extending the deadline by which ballots needed to be received.

**We strongly recommend that the April 7 election in Wisconsin be postponed, possibly to June 2<sup>nd</sup> and mail-in voting continues to be allowed until the date of the postponed election. To do otherwise**

<sup>5</sup> Election dates sourced from <https://www.nytimes.com/article/2020-campaign-primary-calendar-coronavirus.html>

<sup>6</sup> State COVID-19 data sourced from <https://github.com/nytimes/covid-19-data>

would put all Wisconsin communities at greater risk of illness due to COVID-19, and puts our health care systems at risk of becoming overwhelmed and depleted of resources.

***As the local health officers representing jurisdictions throughout the state, we take our responsibility seriously to engage in all measures necessary to prevent, suppress, and control communicable disease and, we are authorized under state law to do what is reasonable and necessary for the prevention and suppression of disease, including forbidding public gatherings when deemed necessary to control outbreaks of epidemics.***

***We understand that our authority to close polling places for in-person voting on April 7, 2020 has been preempted by the DHS Safer at home Order, Executive Order #12, as interpreted by the Governor, the Department of Health Services, and the Wisconsin Election Commission. Nonetheless, if we were not preempted, we would use our authority under Wis. State § 252.03(2) to close the polling places within our jurisdictions on April 7, 2020, notwithstanding our Election Commissioner's efforts to conduct this election pursuant to the State's orders.***

Sincerely, the following Public Health Officers,



Janel Heinrich, MPH, MA  
Director, Public Health Madison & Dane County



Jeanette Kowalik, PhD, MPH, MCHES  
Commissioner of Health, City of Milwaukee Health Department



Marie-Noel Sandoval, MPH  
Health Officer/Director  
[sandoval@co.rock.wi.us](mailto:sandoval@co.rock.wi.us)



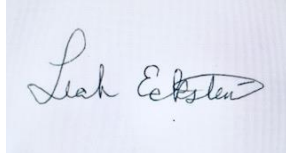
Rock County Public Health Department  
3328 North US Highway 51 P.O. Box 1088  
Janesville, Wisconsin 53547-1088  
(608) 757-5440 Fax: (608) 758-8423 [Facebook](#)

*Collaborating with partners to ensure a healthy, thriving Rock County...*

*Susan Shepard*

Susan Shepard, RN, MSN  
Health Officer/Health Director  
Greendale Health Department

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Leah Eckstein RN, MSN

Health Officer

Adams County Health & Human Services Department

*Lawther*

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**Timothy Lawther, MPH, MA**

*Director and Health Officer*

*Sauk County Public Health*



AZ Snyder, MSc

Public Health Director & Health Officer

Pierce County Public Health Department

*Courtney Day*

Courtney Day, RN, BSN

Director of Health & Human Services/Health Officer City of Franklin Health Department



Sharon L. Nelson, RN, PHN

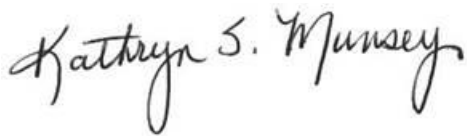
Director/Health Officer

Monroe County Health Department



**Elizabeth Giese**, RN, MSPH | *Health Officer-Director*

Eau Claire City-County Health Department



Kathy Munsey, RN, BSN

Green Lake County Health Officer



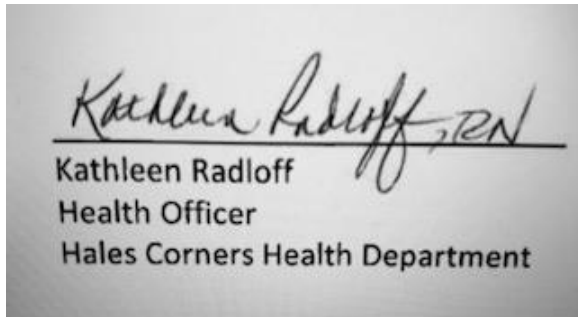
Ann Christiansen, MPH  
Health Director/Health Officer



Serving the communities of Bayside, Brown Deer, Fox Point,  
Glendale, River Hills, Shorewood and Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin



**Laura Sauve, RN, BSN**  
Public Health Program Manager / Health Officer  
Barron County Department of Health & Human



Kelli Engen, RN, MPH  
Health Officer  
St. Croix County DHHS – Public Health

*Robert Leischow*

Robert Leischow, MPH  
Health Commissioner City of West Allis

*Sue Powers, RN, BSN*

*Health Officer/Manager*

*Public Health Division*

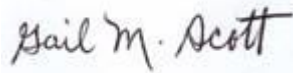
*Door County Department of Health and Human Services*



Jayme L. Sopha, RS

Director, Health Officer

Marquette County Health Department



Gail Scott

Director/Health Officer

Jefferson County Health Department

***Kelli Engen***

**Kelli Engen | Public Health - Public Health Administrator**

**Health and Human Services**



Laura Conklin, MPH

Director and Health Officer

City of Wauwatosa Health Department

***Michelle Edwards***

Michelle Edwards RN, BSN, Health Officer

Price County Health and Human Services Department



**Dottie-Kay Bowersox, MSA**

**City of Racine Public Health Administrator**

Handwritten signature of Cindy Riniker in blue ink, including the text "RN, BSN, MPH".

Cindy Riniker, RN, BSN, MPH

Health Officer, Crawford County

Handwritten signature of Patti Wohlfeil in blue ink.

Patti Wohlfeil, RN, BSN, MPA

Health Officer

Waushara County Health Department

**Annette Seibold, RN, MS**

Health Officer and Director

Florence County Health Department



# Wisconsin Elections Commission

212 East Washington Avenue | Third Floor | P.O. Box 7984 | Madison, WI 53707-7984  
(608) 266-8005 | elections@wi.gov | elections.wi.gov

April 5, 2020

By E-Mail

Speaker Robin Vos	Leader Scott Fitzgerald
217 West State Capitol	211 South State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708	Madison, WI 53707

Re: April 7, 2020 Election

Dear Speaker Vos and Leader Fitzgerald:

Under our legislative structure, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) does not have the authority to delay, cancel or reschedule the April 7 election, nor does it have the authority to make changes to existing laws and regulations. By letter dated March 19, 2020 we strongly urged you to convene a special session to address the stark realities of holding and administering an election in this deadly time of COVID-19. We informed you that “[if]the April 7 election is held as scheduled, Wisconsin cannot guarantee the safety of our voters, clerks, or election workers.” This is more true today than on March 19, even in light of the federal court orders that allow more time to count absentee ballots.

As of early this morning, April 5, 2020 (a day many Wisconsin residents celebrate as Palm Sunday), the WEC reported that 1,268,587 absentee ballots had been requested but only 703,048 absentee ballots had been reported returned. It is clear that people want to safely participate in their democracy! It is equally clear that doing so remains challenging to many.

For voters who did not request an absentee ballot and need to vote on Election Day, or who need to register at the polls, we simply cannot guarantee their safety. We lack staffing. As of the last reported survey by the WEC, 111 municipalities did not have sufficient poll workers to open a single poll site. We have had to consolidate poll sites, thereby risking crowding at in-person voting. As of Friday, Milwaukee’s usual 180 polling places have been concentrated to just 5 (and resulted in yet another federal lawsuit charging the WEC with again violating the rights of African American voters in particular). The city of Neenah consolidated its six poll sites to one; Waukesha changed from 15 sites to one.

*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*

Dean Knudson, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Ann S. Jacobs | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

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*Administrator Meagan Wolfe*

WI-GOV-20-0881-A-000023



Your failure to address these profound issues and the safety of all of Wisconsin's residents during yesterday's special session is unconscionable and is an abdication of your constitutional responsibilities as our leaders. In the face of a deepening and escalating COVID-19 crisis, forcing an in-person election on Tuesday not only threatens the voters, the clerks, and election staff, it threatens everyone those people subsequently come into contact with at home and elsewhere. A single asymptomatic virus-carrying poll worker could transmit the virus to hundreds of people on election day, creating a disease vector that would devastate a community.

In addition to the danger to our voters, clerks and staff (as if that were not enough reason to act), the failure to act yesterday now unnecessarily threatens members of our National Guard and their families. As of right now, the Wisconsin National Guard (WING) service members are being tasked to act as poll workers on April 7 as the pandemic gets hotter, and more and more poll workers decide they cannot safely participate. Rather than having the Guard work to prepare for the surge of COVID-19 cases and deaths that we sadly know are coming, we are instead sending them around the state to be poll workers. They are risking their health, thereby reducing the Guard's availability to act when most needed. This is a short-sighted and unnecessary use of a valuable human resource.

All of these concerns can be addressed with cooperative work between you and the Governor.

We respectfully request that you fulfill your constitutional obligations to help lead us through this time of unprecedented crisis. We implore you to keep our citizens, including members of our Guard, as safe as possible and move the election to allow all of us more time to conduct an election that is constitutionally required BUT NOT ON APRIL 7. It is not too late.

Respectfully,



Ann S. Jacobs  
Commissioner  
Wisconsin State Elections Commission  
Individually



Mark L. Thomsen  
Commissioner  
Wisconsin State Elections Commission  
Individually

cc: The Hon. Tony Evers, Governor  
Meagan Wolfe, Administrator, Wisconsin Elections Commission



Wisconsin Public Health Association  
Wisconsin Association of Local Health  
Departments and Boards



563 Carter Court, Suite B, Kimberly, WI 54136  
920-882-3650 · 877-202-4333

**April 6, 2020**

**TO:** Governor Evers  
Wisconsin Legislature

**FROM:** Wisconsin Public Health Association  
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards

**RE:** Spring Election

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On behalf of over 1,000 public health professionals and 200 public health organizations from around the state, we ask the State of Wisconsin to postpone the April 7 Spring Election and implement an alternative method for voting. This alternative method should meet the following requirements: be consistent with current social distancing requirements, assure all citizens an equal opportunity to exercise their right to vote and maintain continuity of operations for all units of local government. This ask is therefore not made lightly and is fully in consideration of balancing the public's health and safety and the necessity of our government to conduct the spring elections.

Our surveillance clearly documents a growing risk of transmission from infected persons without recognized symptoms which has led to increased community transmission. That is why the current Safer at Home order is in place, and the established social distancing measures are so critical right now for our state. As a result, it is not possible for people to safely assemble in polling places without risking the further spread of COVID-19 to voters and poll workers.

With strict social distancing we may be nearing the peak of this outbreak in Wisconsin, which is in fact the worst time to relax any non-essential physical proximity between people. While some activities, like obtaining groceries, are essential and have no reasonable alternatives for many (e.g., postponement or US mail), there are alternatives for voting. Failure to act on every available opportunity to minimize physical distancing will result in further spread, additional burden on hospitals, and many additional, preventable deaths.

Elections are important and we support holding the election in the safest way possible **which is not holding tomorrow's Spring Election in person**. The legislature and the Governor must act today without delay to prohibit in-person voting and keep Wisconsin safe.