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Mayor

April 21, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of the State of Wisconsin
2 East Main Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
Majority Leader, Wisconsin State Senate
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

The Honorable Robin Vos
Speaker, Wisconsin State Assembly
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Governor Evers, Senator Fitzgerald and Representative Vos:

For the past month, the people of Wisconsin have been united against COVID-19. The vast majority of citizens have stayed at home and complied with social distancing rules. There have been few protests or acts of civil disobedience. Business owners have followed the rules despite the extraordinary pain the rules have inflicted on them, their futures and their employees.

However, as you know, things are rapidly changing. This public health crisis, which is also an economic crisis, and in turn a personal crisis for many, runs the risk of tearing apart our state like nothing else has. That does not need to happen.

Some Wisconsinites are fearful of any change to Safer at Home. Some want everything to fully reopen now. However, the vast majority who I hear from, Republicans and Democrats, recognizes that reopening needs to be careful and gradual.

The vast majority also believes reopening needs to be according to a transparent plan that is sufficiently flexible to respond to changes. They want our leaders to find reasonable compromises to keep our state healthy, both medically and economically. They do not believe it is a binary choice between medical health and economic health.

On behalf of the people in the City of Mequon, and people across the State of Wisconsin, I implore you to meet and find compromise. It is not enough to have an order from the Governor's office that will end up in court. That rarely works well. It also is not enough to have a competing

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plan from the legislature that the Governor will not sign. In the face of a true crisis of this magnitude, we need our leaders to set aside partisanship and find a unified, reasoned and transparent solution that we can rally around.

Arguably, there are appropriate times for partisan fights. This is not one of them. As Republican Brian Fraley and Democrat Dan Adams stated yesterday in a thoughtful article, a copy of which I enclose:

Through clear, direct, and open communication, our leaders can rally all Wisconsinites to meet the challenges before us. People are willing to make sacrifices and change our habits and invest in the effort to limit the impact of the pandemic. This isn't an Us vs Them battle. There is no 'Them.'

It's Us vs The Virus.

No plan will be perfect from anyone's perspective. We understand that. That should be liberating for you. You can make compromises and be confident that most voters will respect you for making them even when differing with parts of the plan so long as they understand the plan is made together and in good faith. We need both to be safe and to support our families. We can neither allow the virus to run rampant nor lose everything we have to avoid all risk.

This is an historic moment. Do not underestimate that. Your legacies will be defined in the next week or so. Nothing you have done, and nothing you will do in the future, will ever be so important. You have the opportunity to bring our state together, if only for this moment. You have the opportunity to provide a model for the country and for future crises. You have the opportunity to be statesmen.

Those of us in local government hear from our constituents about this crisis on an hourly basis. We can make dozens of suggestions that help our businesses and the families that rely on them while maintaining social distancing. We are willing to help.

But we need your thoughtful leadership in bringing our state together. The time is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John M. Wirth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John M. Wirth
Mayor, City of Mequon



WORK TOGETHER, TODAY, TO PREVENT MEDICAL AND ECONOMIC MISERY

By Dan Adams and Brian Fraley

Confronting the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic destruction may be the paramount fight of our entire lives. We won't reiterate the sheer magnitude of the crisis, but only point out that it places Wisconsin in the most dire situation since the Great Depression. Adding to the medical and economic misery is a political system that we've discovered is ill-equipped to fight the virus and recession with a single, united front.

That has to change. Today.

The combined exercise of personal responsibility and government restrictions have helped flatten the curve of this outbreak. Although this month's public gathering at polling locations and the current trickle of mass protests could complicate matters, we've stuck together and prevented the breakdown of our emergency health care system.

It is not time to lift all restrictions. And a level of personal vigilance will be needed for years. However, our elected leaders must immediately agree upon and publicize a series of benchmarks that would trigger the easing of restrictions. Show us plans, today. Let us know details. Trust us.

On Thursday, Governor Evers announced an abrupt extension to his existing Safer-At-Home order. The legality of an extension past the statutory 60-day period is tenuous. However, now is not the time for protracted and equally divisive litigation. Now is the time for leaders to lead.

In Wisconsin, leadership will require Governor Evers and the GOP legislative leaders, Speaker Robin Vos and Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, to negotiate how our economy will re-open in a legal, transparent, and medically-safe fashion. We believe they have it in them to work together.

We know that for the most part bipartisanship is dead both in Madison and Washington D.C., but we aren't calling for a kumbaya moment. We, however, do expect our leaders to confront the crisis that is right here, right now. They must work together to protect our state from further medical and economic disaster.

Two things can be true at the same time and today here is what we should all agree upon: First, the COVID-19 virus must be stopped to the furthest degree possible to save lives and enable our supplies of PPE, ventilators, ICU beds, and medical personnel to be available to anyone who needs them. Second, Wisconsin's economy must be allowed to resuscitate as quickly and dynamically as possible.

Everyone needs to think long-term. Especially our politicians. This is not like a hurricane where recovery begins a few days after the storm passes. Until there is a vaccine, it is likely waves of infection will crash over us. Hot spots will flare up with devastating impact. But we can't wait until the virus is gone. Leadership is required, today.

While not as draconian as the lockdowns imposed in Wuhan where this virus originated, our current sheltering at home regimen is not practicable for 18 months, which is the most-cited timeline for the development and distribution of a vaccine. The question then becomes how do we reach these two goals of preserving public and economic health without our state reliving the Act 10/recall acrimony?

The answer is for our leaders to engage in good faith, accountable negotiations regarding the mechanisms for winding down the Safer-At-Home order.

To ensure the negotiations are made in good faith, both sides must begin by recognizing that sometimes power must be delegated and shared – not held and flexed for short-term political points.

Bi-partisanship is not Constitutionally or statutorily required, but if our leaders want the populace to comply with never-before imposed public health orders, they need to maintain widespread, bipartisan approval. We are getting perilously close to this devolving into a Red Hat vs. Blue Fist conflict, and the public health repercussions of that could be devastating.

But partisan rancor is not inevitable. Through clear, direct, and open communication, our leaders can rally all Wisconsinites to meet the challenges before us. People are willing to make sacrifices and change our habits and invest in the effort to limit the impact of the pandemic. This isn't an Us vs Them battle. There is no 'Them.'

It's Us vs The Virus.

As evidenced by the last several weeks, society can work together for our common welfare, But we need to know how, why and when the government will impose measures to defeat the virus.

To achieve accountability, we propose something as novel as this virus itself: The negotiations between the Governor and Legislature should be public, live-streamed and televised. Backroom negotiations will only feed the public's already brewing cynicism. There should be no room for the parties to snipe through competing letters and press releases or third party surrogates. The public deserves to see the give and take of each side, it will help build acceptance for the eventual consensus.

How do you create a resolution in a space with little trust?

Make the space. And let us watch. Trust us, and you'll earn our trust. Then Wisconsin's people and economy will both get healthier.

There will be plenty of time for electoral politics. Right now Wisconsin requires political acumen. The public has little appetite for a partisan skirmish, and the public health will be jeopardized if such a skirmish escalates.

Respectfully, Get to work. Together.

Dan Adams, a Democrat, is an attorney in private practice in Milwaukee County. Brian Fraley is a Republican who owns Edge Messaging, a consulting firm in Waukesha County.

SOCIAL



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