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Wisconsin could see \$400 million from national opioid settlement



Photo Credit: Associated Press/Mark Lennihan, File

Following years of legal battles, a multi-jurisdictional lawsuit filed by local governments and states around the country may be [close to reaching a settlement agreement](#) worth up to \$26 billion.

If Wisconsin decides to join the settlement agreement, following a review of the details by the Department of Justice, our state could receive up to \$400 million for the damaging roll that opioid manufacturers have played in our state. This would potentially be in addition to another \$65 million from a [separate multi-state settlement](#).

Governments that would receive settlement funds have so far agreed to spend that money on addressing the opioid epidemic in their jurisdictions.

If Wisconsin does receive part of the settlements, that funding would be split between the state and counties for use within their respective areas.

[Read more.](#)

As cases rise, Wisconsin DHS recommends everyone 12 and up get vaccinated

On Thursday, Wisconsin saw 448 new cases of COVID-19 reported, which puts the 7 day average at 274 daily cases. That is almost 4 times higher than the average from one month ago.

This is causing concern for health officials, because time for students 12 years old and up to complete the vaccination series before the start of the new school year in the Fall is coming to a close. The surge that our state saw during 2020 began right with the new school year.

Currently, only 49 percent of Wisconsinites are fully vaccinated, and an additional 2.4 percent have received at least one dose. These numbers indicate that the rate of vaccination has nearly plateaued across our state while we are still well below the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) goal of 80% completion. Less than 40% of school age children are fully vaccinated.

[Read more.](#)

See [DHS COVID-19 data](#).

Recent study puts WI in the bottom 10 states for supporting public health departments

According to a [recently published study](#) from the University of Minnesota's State Health Access Data Assistance Center, Wisconsin ranks 41st in the nation for per capita spending on public health. Most public health funding in the United States comes from state governments and departments own sources of revenue.

Public health officials from Wisconsin hope that data like this, coupled with the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic will help turn the situation around for local departments. Some parts of Wisconsin relied on volunteers, and doctors and nurses called out of retirement, to help administer vaccines and perform contact tracing.

This study was produced before the final Wisconsin state budget was adopted for the next 2 years in which Republicans completely removed funding for 17 out of the 23 programs the Governor had identified for improvement in his budget.

Programs that will be stalled or see no increase for the next two years include:

- Grants to Local Public Health Departments to prevent and control communicable diseases.
- Additional staff for the Bureau of Communicable Diseases
- Lead exposure prevention program
- Tobacco and Vaping Prevention funds
- Health data analysis and predictive modeling team
- Hearing aid assistance program
- Translation of DHS web pages
- and more... [See Public Health items](#) on Pg. 341 (PDF Pg. 357)

[Read more.](#)

Wisconsin Worker's Compensation rates will go down for the 6th straight year

The Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance has approved a 5.44% decrease for Worker's Compensation insurance rates starting October 1st, 2021.

"This is great news for Wisconsin's employers and workers," said Commissioner Afaible. "As our state recovers from the pandemic, this will help provide additional relief to our businesses who could save more than \$90 million thanks to this decreased rate."

See [OCI's press release](#).

Natural Resources Board Chair continues to deny the consent of the governed

As a vote over the harvest quota for the Fall wolf hunt approaches, the chairperson of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board has exceeded his term limit which ended on May 1st.

Fred Prehn was appointed to the NRB by former Governor Scott Walker for a 6 year term which has concluded. But he argues that a [1964 SCOWIS ruling](#) provides that office holders may remain past the end of their terms if the State Senate does not confirm their replacement. The State Senate has deliberately stalled Governor Evers' appointments, with some Cabinet Secretaries having performed their duties for years without confirmation. The Republican leaders have refused to hold a confirmation vote on Governor Evers' appointment to replace Prehn.

An attorney for the Humane Society argues that the 1964 ruling doesn't apply to Prehn, because it was referring to recess appointments, and predates the law that created the board under its current form.

Prehn and the Republican leadership of the Wisconsin State Senate are disregarding the will of the people of our state who elected Tony Evers as governor in 2018 to fulfill all the duties of that office, including making appointments to boards across our state government. It is an utterly cynical ploy to deny the consent of the governed so that conservatives can set the terms for the upcoming wolf hunt and other crucial environmental decisions made by the Natural Resources Board.

[Read more.](#)

Wisconsin Airman's remains brought home after 70 years

United State Air Force Airman 2nd Class Edward J. Miller was returned home to Wisconsin after almost 70 years. Miller grew up in Evansville in Rock County. Governor Evers ordered U.S. and Wisconsin flags to be flown at half-staff in his honor.

He and 52 others died during a transport flight on its way to Anchorage, Alaska during the Korean War. Miller's remains were recovered by the Colony Glacier Recovery Team as part of their missions between 2012 and 2019.

[Read more.](#)

Stories like Miller's remind us that we cannot give up on those who gave everything for our country and state. It is shocking that the state legislature couldn't find any way to compromise and provide funding in the budget for the [MIA Recovery and Identification Project](#) at the UW, which performs similar missions to recover the remains of missing military personnel. [The amendment](#) that I had proposed to restore the funding that the Governor had included in his budget for this program was tabled along party lines.

The Brewers honor the Negro Leagues with tribute game

On Saturday, the Milwaukee Brewers honored the history of the Negro Leagues and the players who are still fighting for recognition by holding a tribute game in their honor.

In the early 1900's Black players were forced off of professional baseball teams, and in 1920 they organized their own league structure as the Negro National League.

Many players from the leagues that formed around the nation have been forgotten to history, despite their athleticism and sportsmanship. I was glad to see the Brewers pay tribute to this significant part of America's baseball history!

[Read more.](#)

Last week marked the 52nd Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Mission

On July 20th, 1969, the world watched while Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took humankind's first steps on the moon.

Relive history of this crowning achievement of the era through a timeline of the Apollo 11 Mission.

[Read more.](#)

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