



The [statewide COVID-19 website](#) is a one stop shop that consolidates information from state agencies, and provides up-to-date information and guidance regarding COVID-19. DHS has also offered information on their website on [How and Where to Get Tested](#).

If you're not busy, please make a call, send a card, or write a letter to someone you know who lives alone of may need assistance.

Please, let them and your family know that you are thinking of them, and that we are here for each other.

Bless each of you during this difficult time of uncertainty and suffering. Take good care!

## Contents

- [Local Governments' Response to Ruling](#)
- [We're All In for Small Business](#)
- [Tax Assessment Objection Deadline Extended](#)
- [Need a Ride? and Other Local Services](#)
- [Elections Commission Report on Absentee Ballots](#)
- [Resources for Crime Victims](#)
- [How Hamburg Handled Cholera](#)

## Court Strikes Down *Safer at Home*



Last week, the Wisconsin Supreme Court [issued a ruling](#) in *Wisconsin Legislature v. Andrea Palm*, the case determining whether the Evers Administration's extension of the *Safer at Home* policy under the authority of the Department of Health Services was lawful.

Ultimately, the Court struck down the extension with immediate effect. They determined that the *Safer at Home* order should have been produced as an *administrative rule*, which would have given the Legislature oversight over its adoption and provisions.

In the majority opinion, penned by Chief Justice Patience Roggensack, she explained what the Court expected to follow, "... we trust that the Legislature and Palm have placed the interests of the people of Wisconsin first and have been working together in good faith to establish a lawful rule that addresses COVID-19 and its devastating effects on Wisconsin. People, businesses and other institutions need to know how to proceed and what is expected of them. Therefore, we place the responsibility for this future law-making with the Legislature and DHS where it belongs."

In the following days, Governor Evers met with the leadership of the Legislature, and it became clear that the Republican's position would be to allow local governments to take control over the response to COVID-19.

## Local Governments are Now On Their Own to Institute Safety Guidelines

When the Department of Health Services produced a scope statement for a rule that would establish a statewide response to COVID-19, that would be in accordance with the Court's ruling, State Senator Steve Nass, a co-chairperson of the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules, immediately [called on the Governor to withdraw the rule](#), stating, "The DHS Scope Statement leaves little doubt that Secretary-Designee Palm is no longer acting in a lawful capacity by circumventing the Supreme Court ruling and once again trying to improperly take control of the daily lives of every Wisconsin citizen."

Although Senator Nass' statement is misleading in its characterization of Secretary Palm, her efforts to keep the people of our state safe, and to comply with the Court's decision, the Administration has decided to withdraw its rule, and focus instead on different avenues that they believe will be more fruitful for helping the people of Wisconsin overcome the pandemic.

**The Legislature's refusal to work with the Governor has led to a chaotic and piecemeal set of guidelines across our state.** Some localities had issued orders in response to the Court's ruling, only to rescind them days later due to confusion over their legal authority to issue them.

The State Supreme Court did not rule that such rules were illegal, but rather defined the process through which they could be made, because the State Department of Health Services did not use that process, the state-wide order was invalidated. [Attorney General Josh Kaul has issued an opinion](#) clarifying the rulings effects on local governments' ability to create their own guidelines.

Both the City of Milwaukee, and the suburban communities of Milwaukee County, have issued their own orders to continue the framework put in place by the *Safer at*

*Home* order and the *Badger Bounce Back* plan.

You can find the City of Milwaukee's [new order](#) and [public health plan](#), as well as more information about COVID-19 in Milwaukee, on the [City of Milwaukee Health Department Website](#).

For the suburban communities of Milwaukee county, see: [Order #1: COVID-19 Public Health Plan for Suburban Milwaukee County](#) and for more information about COVID-19 in Milwaukee County, visit the [Milwaukee County COVID-19 website](#).

If you work in another part of the state that is not within the City or County of Milwaukee, and are having a difficult time obtaining information about current public health orders in that locality, please contact my office and we can help you find the most up to date information.

## **New Grant Program for Small Businesses and Info on Unemployment**

Governor Evers and the WEDC's Secretary-designee Missy Hughes rolled out the [We're All In initiative](#), a \$75 million grant program funded through the federal CARES Act.

The initiative will provide \$2,500 cash grants to assist small businesses with the costs of business interruption, health and safety improvements, wages and salaries, rent, mortgages, or inventory. Applications will be accepted in early June.

Grants will be awarded to small businesses impacted by COVID-19 with 20 or fewer FTEs, which have not already received WEDC COVID-19 assistance. The Evers administration has also released a set of guidelines for businesses to follow in order to keep their staff and clientele safe. They can be found on the WEDC's website: <https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines>.

If you are a business owner, and your business has been affected, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation has a webpage for [COVID-19 Business Insights and Relief Information](#) with information about local, state, and federal resources, such as the [Small Business 20/20 Program](#) for business with 20 or fewer employees, and the [SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program](#) for businesses with fewer than 500 employees.

Over half a million Wisconsin residents have filed with the Department of Workforce Development for Unemployment since the outbreak began.

To begin the process of filing for unemployment, start at [DWD's Unemployment Benefits for Claimants](#) webpage, and click on "Apply for Benefits Online."

If you do not qualify for standard unemployment, [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) is meant to provide benefits to many of those who are not eligible for regular Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance.

For more information about this process see the [Unemployment FAQs](#) and the [Handbook for Claimants](#).

In order to help work through the backlog of current applicants for unemployment, the Department of Workforce Development is adding new call centers and expanding staff hours. 243 employees have been transferred from within DWD and from other state agencies to the Unemployment Insurance department, and with new hires and call centers the number of staff handling unemployment claims will increase from less than 50 before the pandemic to more than 1,300.

### **Tax Assessment Objection Deadline Extended to June 8**

This year many residents of the City of Milwaukee noticed a significant increase in their property tax assessment for their homes.

After concerns were raised by City residents and several of the Alderpersons serving on the Common Council, **the Milwaukee Board of Review has voted to extend the deadline for filing of assessment objections to Monday, June 8 at 4:45pm.**

Residents who wish to file an objection may continue to do so by contacting the Assessor's Office by phone at (414) 286-6565 or email [assessor@milwaukee.gov](mailto:assessor@milwaukee.gov) It is recommended that evidence be submitted with an appeals form. Examples of evidence include: A copy of a recent appraisal, a recent market analysis conducted by a real estate agent, photos of the interior or exterior of your home that show deferred maintenance area or photos of the interior or exterior of your home that show a certain feature is not present that is listed on the Property Record Card. Information on appealing an assessment can be found at: [the City of Milwaukee Assessor's Office Website](#).

### **Rides are Available for COVID-positive Individuals, and Other Local Services**

Milwaukee County will provide free transportation to non-emergency health appointments, COVID-19 testing, or an isolation facility for any adult who is in self-quarantine because they are COVID-19+, have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or have been directly exposed to another person who is COVID-19+ or exhibited such symptoms. This service is available to any Milwaukee County adult resident who does not have Medicaid/Badgercare health insurance.

Please do not take a chance of exposing a friend, relative, or another driver. **Call the Aging Resource Center at 289-6874 to schedule a ride.**

Transportation for County residents over age 60 who were not exposed to COVID-19 remain available for non-emergency health appointments and the grocery store.

#### **Aging Resource Center Open to Serve You!**

If you have any questions about services, supports, meals, transportation, counseling, or almost any other question relating to older adults, call your [Milwaukee County Aging Resource Center](#) at: Phone: (414) 289-6874

Toll Free: (866) 229-9695

TRS: 711

## **SeniorLAW will provide legal representation to seniors claiming Unemployment Insurance benefits**

Legal Action of Wisconsin's [SeniorLAW](#) will expand the scope of its representation to seniors to include unemployment insurance benefits, which were recently expanded through the CARES Act. For more information on coronavirus/COVID-19 and Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance visit: [DWD Unemployment COVID-19 Public Information](#)

## **Energy Assistance Expands Eligibility**

In response to COVID19, the State of Wisconsin has approved new income guidelines for Energy Assistance benefits. Instead of considering an applicant's last 3 months of income only the past 1 month of income will be considered effective 3/30/2020. Residents can call to schedule an appointment at **414-270-4MKE**. Note: All sites are temporarily closed to the public. All appointments are by phone. Visit [Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services website](#) for more information.

## **Telecommunication and Internet Services are Available through the Lifeline Program**

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission has launched a new Internet & Phone Helpline at (608) 267-3595. Consumer Affairs staff address issues related to access or maintaining reliable internet or phone service. The Lifeline program provides low-income Wisconsin residents affordable access to essential telecommunications by discounting the cost of phone, cell and internet services. You can check eligibility online using the National Verifier at [www.checklifeline.org](http://www.checklifeline.org), but you must contact an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) to enroll.

## **Wisconsin Elections Commission Report on Absentee Ballots used for the April Election**

In order to learn from the experiences of our spring election this year, during which an unprecedented number of voters chose to vote through the absentee process in order to avoid possible exposure to COVID-19, the Wisconsin Elections Commission has issued an Absentee Voting Report looking at the statistics and issues surrounding absentee voting for the April 7th election.

The report is a detailed look at the record number of absentee ballots cast, and discusses ballots found unprocessed in mail processing centers, and explains that the U.S. Postal service has not yet responded to written inquiries seeking specifics on those ballots. In the report, Commission staff explain that if the ratio of ballots cast by mail holds for the November election, the state could see over 1.8 million requests for mail-in absentee ballots.

[Read the report.](#)

[Apply for an Absentee Ballot.](#)

## **DOJ Highlights Resources for Crime victims and Advocates**

After the recent passage of Marsy's Law via statewide referendum, the Wisconsin Department of Justice has brought together information about available resources for crime victims and victim advocates.

### **Toll-Free Phone Line**

Crime victims may get answers to questions by calling DOJ's Office of Crime Victim Services at 1-800-446-6564 on weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or visiting <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs>.

### **Victim & Witness Rights**

Information regarding victim and witness rights can be found at <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/victim-rights/victim-witness-rights>.

### **Information and Resources for Navigating the Criminal Justice**

#### **Process**

Information and links to resources that can assist victims of crime, as well as their friends and family members, as they navigate the criminal justice process are available at <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/specialized-resources/information-victims-families>.

### **Safe at Home – Wisconsin's Address Confidentiality Program**

Information about Wisconsin's address confidentiality program for victims of acts or threats of abuse or for those who fear for their safety is available at <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/safe-home>.

### **Local Crime Victim Resources**

Find services in your county: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/find-local-crime-victim-resources>.

For more information, please contact DOJ's Office of Crime Victim Services at 1-800-446-6564 or <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs>.

Read the [DOJ press release](#).

## **Lessons that Hamburg Learned from the 1892 Cholera Outbreak**

In 1892, the German city state of Hamburg suffered from a devastating outbreak of cholera, killing about 10,000 people in six weeks.

The severity of the outbreak was exacerbated by missteps that were taken by the city's government, ignoring the recent scientific discoveries that could have helped them understand and avoid such an outbreak.

Historians who have studied outbreaks like this one believe that the lessons that these historical events teach us have implications for the way we handle public health emergencies today.

[Read more.](#)

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