



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 or may need assistance.

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

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State Budget's Effect on Our Region



Over the last several state budgets, we have seen how priorities of the state legislature in Madison can significantly impact the operations of the Milwaukee County Government, as well as the municipalities and across our region.

At a recent public hearing by the Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin Legislature, County Executive David Crowley testified to provide a picture of what this is projected to look like for the next biennium.

He explained that state mandated services like jail and court costs end up costing the Milwaukee county about \$20 million more than what is collected in property taxes, putting the county at an operating deficit.

Local officials are not looking for the state to remove the responsibilities of service, and Executive Crowley stated, *"Solving this problem by only cutting services is not possible nor is it sustainable. We must address the*

revenue side of this equation, while also taking this opportunity to maintain our economic competitiveness."

The upcoming budget provides a fresh opportunity for the State Legislature to consider the needs of local communities when they craft a budget that can provide more shared revenue to local governments, and provide new mechanisms for raising revenue at the local level to cover costs through referendum. If state shared revenue provisions had kept pace with inflation, the City of Milwaukee would be receiving \$111 million more today than it did in 2003. In the current budget, county and municipal aid is 20.7% lower than the amount provided in 2003.

This has become a perennial issue during state budget negotiations, and over the years, the restriction of shared revenues coming to our local governments has consistently caused the reduction of important services like bus service routes, park maintenance, and programs for seniors and working families. During the upcoming budget process, it will be my goal to make sure that local governments' needs are considered so that they no longer need to run operating deficits just to cover state mandated services.

[Read more](#) about the testimony from the hearing.

[Read more](#) about this budget item from the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Wisconsin DHS Rolls Out New Vaccine Finder Tool

Wisconsin has continued to be a leader on vaccination distribution, and recently the state reached 4 million doses administered. Over 40 percent of our state has received at least 1 dose of the vaccine, and over 30 percent has completed their vaccine series.

To help keep the numbers high, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services is employing a new vaccine finder tool to make it easier for those who are trying to make appointments. The new tool can filter by vaccine type, which is especially useful for 16 and 17 year olds who can only receive the Pfizer vaccine.

[Vaccinefinder.org](https://vaccinefinder.org) is created and hosted by the CDC, and it will replace the state's vaccine provider map.

COVID-19 and Healthcare Burnout

As the past year has been extremely difficult on the general population, it has also taken its toll on our healthcare workforce. Stresses from lack of protective equipment to high

case volume have contributed to an acceleration of retirements relative to new professionals entering the field. This effect has been seen [worldwide](#), and also here in Wisconsin.

It is critical that we provide support to these workers, and find new strategies to bring more professionals into our healthcare settings. The [Wisconsin Hospital Association Workforce Report](#) provides many insights into what factors are causing these trends, and also provides several recommendations for solutions to this issue.

I will be working hard to make sure that the needs of our healthcare workforce is prioritized during the upcoming budget negotiations, and throughout the upcoming session. They have kept our state above water even during the most difficult moments of the pandemic, we owe them our support and gratitude.

Foxconn May Qualify for Tax Credits for the First Time

Under the terms of a renegotiated contract, which brings the Foxconn deal in line with other business tax credits that the state awards, Foxconn will have a new chance to earn the tax credits for which it is eligible.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's CEO, Missy Hughes, described the new deal this way: *"By right-sizing the agreement to reflect the investment that Foxconn was making and the jobs that they were going to create, we have the ability to say Foxconn is being treated the same as many of our other companies."*

According to the WEDC, Foxconn has met its goals for capital investments, but in order to earn any credits, they must also meet their minimum job creation goal of 481 jobs in 2020.

I was strongly opposed to the original Foxconn deal. Much of the negotiation took place behind closed doors, and we were given no time to understand the details of what we were voting on, despite it being the largest tax incentive package for a foreign corporation in American history. I reached out to many constituents in 2017 before the deal was finalized to get their perspective and the majority were opposed to the deal, the environmental carveouts, and wanted to see a guarantee that the jobs would go to Wisconsinites.

Although Governor Evers has made a much more workable deal for Wisconsin taxpayers by reining in the awards for which Foxconn is eligible, there are still portions of the Foxconn deal that only the state legislature can repeal. These include the environmental permitting exemptions, Great Lakes water diversion, utilities permitting exemptions, and special judicial power to appeal all cases directly to the State Supreme Court.

Now that the deal has been rightsized, with more realistic goals and awards, I think it is time that we looked at rightsizing these other parts of the arrangement as well.

[Read more.](#)

New Headquarters for Hunger Task Force and Milwaukee Tool

In December, the [Hunger Task Force](#) announced plans to move from its current headquarters at 201 S Hawley Ct. to a new location at 5000 W. Electric Ave. The new location has nearly double the amount of space for the food bank.

The search for a new headquarters was prompted by the increased demand for services during the pandemic, and the new location will allow the organization to house all of its staff in one location for the first time. Hunger Task Force has launched a capital campaign to support the transition of this new space into a foodbank with freezer and cooler space, a volunteer welcome center and a community education kitchen. Take a [virtual tour](#) of the new location.

Meanwhile, [Milwaukee Tool](#) is also looking to bring thousands of jobs to a new downtown office that would be located just outside of the district. The expansion is driven by the company's strong global sales. They are planning to move to the downtown area in order to attract and keep good employees. [Read more.](#)

Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation Holds Steady Through Recent Census

According to recently released apportionment data from the 2020 Census, Wisconsin will neither gain nor lose a US House seat from its Congressional Delegation and maintain its number of Electoral College votes.

Michigan, Illinois, New York, California, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia are the states that will be losing a seat, while Florida, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon all gained one seat. Texas was the country's biggest change gaining 2 new seats.

Although the state remains steady for reapportionment at the national level, the various congressional districts within our borders have grown and shrunk at different rates over the last 10 years.

[Read more.](#)

Governor Pledges to Plant 75 Million Trees to Fight Deforestation and Climate Change

Through a tree planting initiative, Governor Evers is working to plant 75 million trees by the end of the decade, which will have the potential to store 28.8 million tons of carbon dioxide over the next 50 years.

The state's chief forester explained that the commitment also involves conserving 125,000 new acres of forest land across the state.

[Read more.](#)

How Past Pandemics Created More Recreational Green Space

Because many medical professionals of the nineteenth century attributed the devastating Cholera outbreaks in New York City and throughout the world to "miasma" or noxious air, initiatives were born to create more green space in urban areas.

These parks were intended to act like a communal pair of lungs, taking in bad air and sending back clean air. Although that may not have been the ultimate solution to the cholera outbreak, we have their efforts to thank for many of the most well known green spaces such as Central Park.

[Read more.](#)

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