



ROBERT W. WIRCH

STATE SENATOR TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT

December 11, 2020



Dear friend,

Chanukah, the Jewish faith's eight-day "festival of lights" began yesterday, December 10, and runs through December 18 this year. The Hebrew word "Chanukah" (also spelled "Hanukkah" or some variation) means "dedication"; the festival is given this name as it celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem following a great battle; you can read the full story of Chanukah at chabad.org. Chanukah is traditionally celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting and special prayers and foods. One reason wintertime is so special and magical to so many is that a number of different faiths and cultures have holidays or celebrations taking place. Christmas, Kwanzaa, the Winter Solstice and the New Year celebration are some other examples. Whatever you celebrate, please do so safely this year. While a Covid-19 vaccine is on the horizon, it will likely be a number of months before enough of us are vaccinated to make a mark. The choices we make between now and then will determine how well we get through this uncertain period. Stay home and celebrate with just those in your household. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bob

In Case You Missed It

State Capitol, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882 • (608) 267-8979

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Email: Sen.Wirch@legis.state.wi.us • Website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen22/news> • Fax: (608) 267-0984
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small business **SPOTLIGHT**



Phil and Patti of Castle Lanes Will Bowl You Over with Family-Friendly Fun



2020 has been a difficult year for dining and leisure activity establishments, including Racine's Castle Lanes. However, that hasn't stopped owners Phil and Patti Ontko from following health guidelines and offering a clean, safe place for a family outing. Castle Lanes is a giant in the industry, named Best in Racine County year after year; recognized by Travel and Leisure Magazine as one of America's Coolest Bowling Alleys; and listed among 95 Bowling Centers You Must See Before You Die by Bowlers Journal International. Castle Lanes accommodates serious, experienced bowlers with a variety of league options, as well as first-timers and families. Phil and Patti also give back to the community, hosting and/or promoting toy drives and other charity events and using their social media account so share important, *factual* information and updates on Covid-19. Check out what Castle Lanes has to offer on their website and Facebook pages.

<https://castlelanes.com/home>

https://www.facebook.com/castle.lanes/?ref=page_internal



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Full Impact of Thanksgiving Not Yet Seen in Covid Numbers; Experts Fear Christmas Gatherings Could Cause Even More Damage

Nationally, the Covid-19 death count continues to break records day after day. Here in Wisconsin, the number of deaths and hospitalizations continue at unsustainably high levels. Due to a sharp decrease in the number of people seeking tests, however, the true state of the pandemic in Wisconsin. Experts fear that the true impact of the Thanksgiving holiday is not yet known or has not been experienced yet. They also say that the upcoming Christmas and New Year holidays could be even more detrimental to controlling spread of the virus. On the bright side, the federal Food and Drug Administration is on the verge of approving Emergency Use Authorization of the Pfizer vaccine here in the U.S.; estimates on when most people will be able to receive the vaccine vary.



Increased Covid Testing Options

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While the state Department of Health Services cites “Very High Covid Activity” in **71 of 72 counties**, there are currently an increased number of options locally for anyone looking to get tested. Your primary health care provider is always an option, but there are many community testing sites available, as well.

National Guard Drive-through testing in Kenosha County: Free, drive-through testing from 9 am to 5 pm on Fridays, Dec. 11 and 18, at Salem Lakes Fire and Rescue Station No. 1, 11252 254th Ct., Trevor. No appointments are necessary, and symptoms are not required in order to get tested. Testing is open to any person who lives or works in Wisconsin and is age 5 or above. Online pre-registration is recommended at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov>.

CVS Pharmacy: Drive-through testing available at CVS in Kenosha (3710 57th Ave.) and Racine (3915 Durand Ave.); advance registration required at <https://www.cvs.com/minuteclinic/covid-19-testing>

Froedert South: Drive-through testing is available to those who qualify after completing an initial phone evaluation at (262)671-7777 between 8 am and 4:30 pm Monday-Friday

Kenosha Community Medical Center/Gateway Kenosha Campus: A drive-through testing site is open to those who complete a quick registration process at (262)925-1325

Ascension: Offering testing by appointment, (833)981-0711 or choose.ascension.org/onlinecare
To find other testing sites in the state, visit

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/community-testing.htm>.

Advocate Aurora has halted their drive-through testing in Kenosha, as well as Milwaukee and Green Bay. They say the decision was made to redirect staff to patient care, as their inpatient counts continue to rise exponentially.

In some good news, UW System schools statewide, including Parkside, have been provided with a limited number of rapid-result Covid-19 tests. These tests provide results in 15-30 minutes. The tests are free of charge and available to the public, and you don’t have to have symptoms to get a test. A positive rapid test will need to be confirmed with the regular Covid-19 test but will provide you some guidance on whether or not you need to quarantine during that period. Registration at <https://www.doineedacovid19test.com> is required. The tests are administered in De Simone Gym in the SAC on the Parkside campus Monday-Thursday, 9 am - 5 pm, and Friday, 9 am - 1 pm. Testing is expected to last at least several weeks.

<https://www.uwp.edu/explore/news/surge-testing.cfm>

The Kenosha Fire Department will be offering free Covid-19 testing on Tuesdays-Saturdays; hours and end dates vary, <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/2058/COVID-19-Testing-Locations>. Anyone who lives or works in Wisconsin, ages 5 and above, can get a test. Testing will be conducted at vacant Fire Station #3, 2121 Roosevelt Rd. An appointment is strongly encouraged through <https://10to8.com/book/modernapothecary>. After making an appointment, please register in advance at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov/en-US/>.



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Without Action, a Number of Covid Relief Measures Will Expire at the End of the Year, Early Next Year

A host of initiatives, both state and federal, aimed at relieving the medical and financial burdens imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic will be coming to an end either on December 31 or in the early days of 2021 unless action is taken quickly by Congress and the State Legislature.

Approved by Congress on a bipartisan basis earlier this year, the federal CARES Act was a broad Covid relief package. It contained hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to states, including \$2.2 billion to Wisconsin, to cover costs of testing, purchases of PPE, business grants and loans, school safety measures and other types of Covid mitigation. The funding ends on December 31, whether it has been allocated by a state or not. Republicans in the State Legislature, meanwhile, have refused to meet to authorize state funds to cover the costs of testing beyond December 31, should federal money run out.

Also included in the CARES Act were supplemental weekly unemployment payments; the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program to provide unemployment benefits to self-employed individuals, gig economy workers and others who normally wouldn't qualify; and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, a federally-funded thirteen week extension of unemployment benefits. These, too, are set to end as of December 31, meaning right after Christmas, tens of thousands of Wisconsin families will lose their benefits.

Earlier this year, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a moratorium on evictions, which ends on December 31. Negotiations on these federal issues are ongoing.

At the state level, waivers of both the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits and the unemployment work search requirement, which were put in place early on in the Covid crisis, will come to an end in February 2021.

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Governor Evers has released a proposal which would address state funding for Covid tests and other response measures, a state moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, and an extension of the UI requirement waivers. Republican leaders in the State Senate have said they don't plan to come back into session to vote on anything until early 2021.



Time Running Out to Pass Homelessness-Fighting Legislation Before New Year

Another matter of urgency, where Senate Republicans have refused to act, is a package of legislation aimed at addressing the state's homelessness problem. The package consists of eight bills and an allocation of \$15 million over the next two years. The bills have broad bipartisan support and the backing of advocates for the homeless. All eight were passed unanimously by the State Assembly in 2019; Republican leadership in the State Senate has allowed a vote on only one of the eight, and it also passed without opposition. If the State Senate does not convene to pass the remaining bills before the end of the year, all eight will have to begin the legislative process all over again. Read a statement I issued calling out Republicans in the State Senate [here](#).



Governor to Hold “People’s Budget” Virtual Listening Session on Public Schools and Education

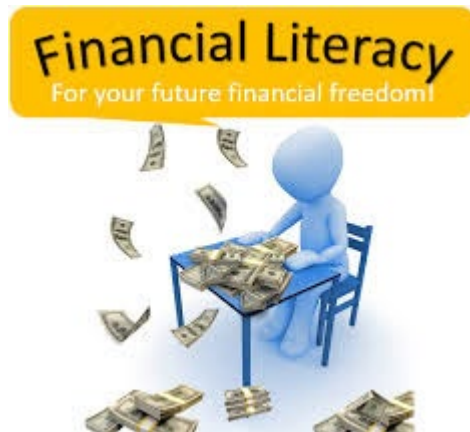
Continuing a tradition started during his campaign, but with a twist to adapt to the age of Covid, Governor Tony Evers will be holding a series of virtual listening sessions to gather input on the upcoming state budget. The next in the series focuses on public education. Participants must register ahead of time [here](#); registration is available one week before the scheduled session date. Wisconsinites are also welcome to send their thoughts on this, or any other topic, at any time [here](#).

Budget Listening Session on Our Schools and Education
Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 6 pm



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Racine Becomes First City in Wisconsin to Offer Financial Counseling as a Public Service

Earlier this week, Racine Mayor Cory Mason announced the opening of the Racine Financial Empowerment Center (FEC), joining 30 other cities nationwide and becoming the first in the state to offer financial coaching as a city service. The FEC will provide no-cost, confidential, individual/family counseling to help those with low and moderate incomes manage their finances, get debt under control, learn about banking products and services, improve or establish credit and build savings. The FEC will share space with the Racine Public Library, but for the time being, due to Covid, all sessions will be virtual or over the phone. A Spanish-language counselor is available for those who need it. The city will use \$150,000 obtained through private/public partnerships to start the FEC, with plans in place to raise funds for continued operations. For more information, go to

racinefec.org.



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Healthcare.Gov Open Enrollment Periods End Soon

If you are still looking for healthcare coverage for 2021, you've got just days left to sign up for coverage through the federal healthcare exchange at [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov). [Healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) plans are open to anyone, and subsidies are available for lower-income individuals and families; open enrollment ends on December 15. Find out more about your options at <https://www.coveringwi.org/>.