



ROBERT W. WIRCH

STATE SENATOR TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT

January 29, 2021



Dear friend,

I hope you have all gotten shoveled out from the snowstorm that hit earlier this week. It's winter in Wisconsin - you knew it had to happen sooner or later. With January coming to an end, brighter (and warmer) days are ahead. The end of January also means the beginning of Black History Month, recognized every February. The theme for this year is "The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity" and will focus on the spread of Black families across the United States. In other news, legislative Republicans took action this week to eliminate the statewide mask requirement, getting rid of the one statewide measure in place to slow the spread of Covid-19 and disqualifying Wisconsin from \$49 million per month in low-income food assistance in the process. The process of getting Wisconsinites vaccinated continues; see below for local details. We are approaching a full year of living with the pandemic. There is light at the end of the tunnel, but now is not the time to let up. Stay vigilant; wear your mask, and stay home as much as possible. Stay safe, and stay healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob".

In Case You Missed It



Northern Lights Gallery in Racine Offers Decor and Jewelry for Every Occasion, Showcases Local Talent

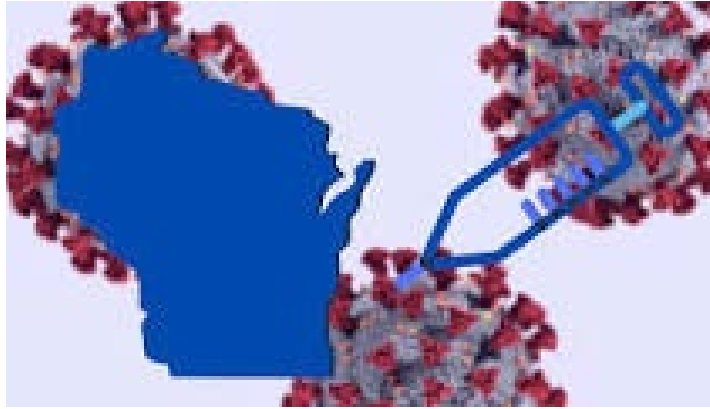


Racine's Northern Lights Gallery has come a long way since it opened in 1999 - literally, in fact, as it started operation in Northern Wisconsin before moving to Racine. Located Downtown, Northern Lights has become a destination for handmade jewelry, one of a kind decor, unique gifts and art by local talent. Their goods are sourced mainly from the US and Canada, and they accommodate most styles and budgets. Northern Lights features easy online shopping and gift wrapping. Check out Northern Lights Gallery at 423 Main St. in Racine or online at <https://www.thenorthernlightsgallery.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/northernlightsgalleryracine/>.



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Kenosha and Racine Covid Vaccine Updates

Earlier this week, the state Department of Health Services signed off on a plan for the next round of Covid-19 vaccinations, phase 1b. This group will include seniors (who are already eligible), public transit workers, education and child care workers, grocery store employees, incarcerated people, and those enrolled in Medicaid long-term care programs like IRIS and Family Care. Unfortunately, due to the limited number of doses the state currently receives from the federal government each week, this group will likely not be able to get a first dose before March 1. President Biden this week acknowledged that the previous administration left the vaccine rollout process in even worse shape than previously believed, but he has pledged to increase states' weekly vaccine allocation by 16%.

Locally, Kenosha County has published a list of local Covid-19 vaccine providers, including links to their appointment registration systems. The objective is to make the information more easily available to the public. Dr. Jen Freiheit, Kenosha County Health Officer, cautioned, however, that availability remains limited. You can find the listing at <http://bit.ly/KCCOVIDHub> or by clicking the flashing red button at the top of the homepage at <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/>.

Racine County residents can sign up for email updates on vaccination progress by visiting <https://crchd.com/covid-19-vaccine> and clicking on the "Vaccine Updates Email Sign Up" button. Completing the form does not guarantee that you will be vaccinated by the health department due to vaccine availability.



Medical and Business Groups Oppose Elimination of Mask Requirement, Assembly Republicans Put Off Vote After News Reports State Could Lose \$49 Million a Month in Food Assistance

Republicans in the State Senate have voted to eliminate the requirement, issued by Governor Tony Evers, that masks be worn in public. Virtually every medical and healthcare group in the state, as well as business owners and small business advocacy groups, opposed the move, saying that it could lead to a resurgence in cases and make it more difficult for businesses to continue operating safely. In the Senate, two Republicans, Sens. Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) and Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) voted against elimination of the requirement. Following the Senate vote, a report by The Hunger Task Force and a memo by the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau revealed that, if the public health emergency were overturned, the state stood to lose \$49 million per month in food assistance to low-income families. This food assistance was allocated by Congress to help mitigate economic harm caused by the pandemic and is only available to states with an active public health emergency. As a result, the Assembly put off a vote on the resolution, but the reprieve is likely temporary. In additional mask news, as new, more contagious variants of Covid-19 continue to spread, experts now recommending double masking as much as possible.



Local Covid Testing Options

There are a 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.

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>



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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: A drive-through testing site at the former Chase Bank, 5506 Seventh Ave., is open to patients who complete a quick registration process at <https://www.kenoshachc.org/covid-19-resource-center/>. Testing is conducted Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 am to 4 pm.

Old Kenosha Fire Station No. 3: Free, drive-through testing will be offered during the following hours at the former No. 3 Fire Station, 2121 Roosevelt Rd., Kenosha: Tuesdays, 2-6 pm; Thursdays, 2-6 pm; Saturdays, 9 am - 1 pm. This testing is being offered in a partnership between locally-owned Modern Apothecary, the Wisconsin DHS, and the Kenosha Fire Department. An appointment and preregistration is strongly encouraged, with appointment times available at <https://modernapothecary.10to8.com> and registration available at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov>. Anyone who lives or works in Wisconsin, ages 5 and over, can be tested.

Festival Hall in Racine: Each Thursday, January 7 - March 4, from 9 am to 5 pm, at Festival Hall, 5 Fifth St., Racine. Pre-registration at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov> is encouraged.

To find other testing sites in the state, visit

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

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>



State Revenue Projections Now \$1.2 Billion Higher than November Estimate

Wisconsin received some good economic news this week as the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau's newest projection has the state's general fund tax collections coming in \$1.2 billion higher than previously estimated in November 2020. While this is just a projection, it paints a much more optimistic picture of the state's fiscal condition as the Governor and Legislature head into debate on the next state budget.



Rep. McGuire Authors, Wirth Co-sponsors “Main Street Recovery” Package for Small Businesses

With small businesses and working families hurting as much as anyone from the economic damage done by Covid-19, I have signed onto a package of legislation authored by Rep. Tip McGuire (D-Kenosha) to give them some tax relief and help them stay afloat. The Main Street Recovery Package would: 1) Allow individuals to claim their 2019 earned income for 2020 for the purpose of the Earned Income Tax Credit, thereby giving them a larger EITC; and 2) Ensure that Wisconsin businesses are not taxed on state grants they received from programs such as We're All In that were created using federal CARES Act funds. These are good, common-sense ideas that should get bipartisan support, and I hope to see the Legislature act on them quickly.



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Time Running Out to Request Absentee Ballot for Spring Primary

It seems like just yesterday that we were voting in the fall election, but another election is just weeks away. The spring primary election will be held on Tuesday, February 16. The deadline to request an absentee ballot is February 11. If you haven't yet done so and wish to, you can request an absentee ballot at myvote.wi.gov.



Federal Eviction and Foreclosure Moratorium in Place Until March 31

I know that there is some confusion about a moratorium on evictions. To be clear, the moratorium was scheduled to expire on January 31, but President Biden has extended it through March 31. More can be found [here](#).

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