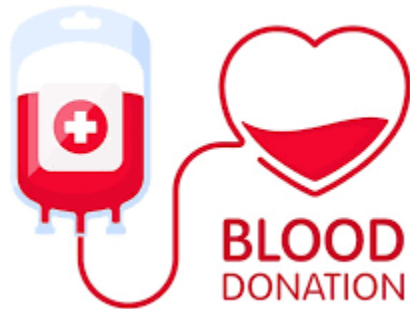


**January 21, 2022**



**Dear friends,**

**January is National Blood Donor Month. It comes at an important time this year, as the American Red Cross is currently facing the worst blood shortage in over a decade. The dangerously low blood supplies have forced some hospitals to defer patients from major surgery, including organ transplants. The Covid pandemic has meant far fewer blood drives in schools, colleges, and other public spaces, and each surge brings with it a dip in donations. Total donations are down 10% since March 2020. That might not sound like a lot, but combined with the fact that an estimated 13% of hospitalized Covid patients will need a blood transfusion, it has put a huge strain on our nation's blood supply. Please, if you are able, consider donating. You can find information on blood donation, including local donation sites, at <https://www.redcross.org/>.**

**Stay safe and healthy.**

**Sincerely,**

*Bob*

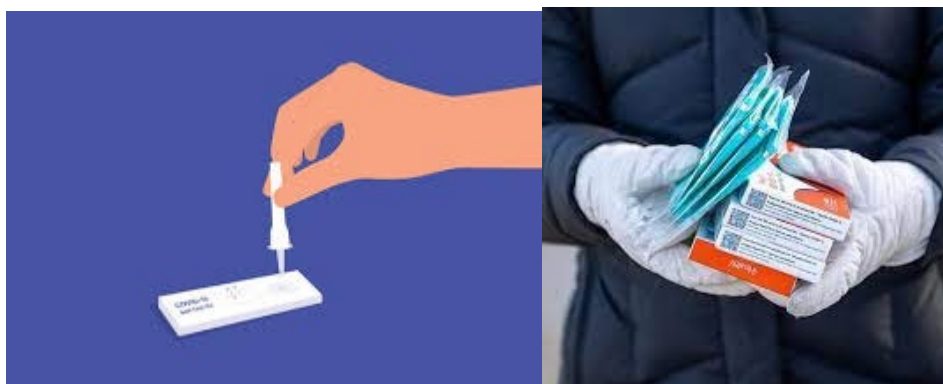
# small business **SPOTLIGHT**



## *When it Comes to Sandwiches, Big Chains are No Match for Lee's Deli*

With the rise of multiple big chain franchises, sandwich shops are a dime a dozen. Lee's Deli, 2615 Washington Ave. in Racine, stands out from the pack. A local mainstay for more than 40 years, Lee's offers great food at a great price served by friendly staff. Whether you are looking for a cold sub or a hot sandwich, Lee's has something to satisfy your tastebuds. They even offer kids' meals, seafood and chicken plates, and a number of different sides. While ownership has changed over the years, the consistency of the food has kept customers coming back for more. Find more [here](#) and [here](#).

## **In Case You Missed It**



## *Biden Administration Makes Free Covid Tests and Masks Available*

You can now sign up to receive four free Covid-19 tests per household, thanks to an order from the Biden administration. With just your name and address, you can order the tests for your household at <https://www.covidtests.gov/>; you can also use this site to find nearby testing locations. Additionally, as a result of actions taken by both President Biden and Governor Evers, your insurance may be required to cover up to eight at-home rapid tests per month. Beginning next week, the Biden administration will make 400 million N95 masks available to Americans for free. The masks will be distributed through a number of pharmacies and

community health centers, with the program expected to be fully operational by early February.

Those picking up masks will be limited to three per person.

If someone you know either doesn't have or doesn't use a computer, please call my office at (608)267-8979 for assistance ordering your household's tests.



## ***State Supreme Court Hears Oral Arguments in Redistricting Case***

The Wisconsin State Supreme Court heard more than six hours of oral arguments on Wednesday in a case involving the state's new Legislative and Congressional district maps. Attorneys representing numerous interested parties, including Black Leaders Organizing for Communities (BLOC), the Wisconsin Senate Democrats, the far-right Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, Gov. Tony Evers, and legislative Republicans. The seven justices focused many of their questions on compliance with the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and how many majority-minority districts must be created. In November, the court ordered that all proposed maps should follow the "least change" principle, meaning they don't deviate too far from the heavily gerrymandered maps Republicans put in place in 2011. The Supreme Court's decision on the new maps will likely come quickly; the Wisconsin Elections Commission needs them by March in order to give candidates enough time to circulate nomination papers. A separate case is still pending in federal court, where a three judge panel could still rule; the panel has indicated, however, that they believe redistricting is best decided at the state level.



## ***WI AG Kaul Working to Eliminate International Scam Calls***

One of the top complaints that I hear from people is that they can't even answer their phones anymore because of the deluge of scam phone calls that they receive every day. I know how maddening it is; my staff and I get those calls, too. Telling them to stop doesn't help. Signing up for the Do Not Call List doesn't make them all go away.

What's going on?

These calls are made by criminals who are part of international organizations. They use technology to block their numbers, make it look like they are calling from a local number, anything they can to get you to answer the phone. Once they've got you on the line, their only goal is for you to give up money or your personal information. Because they are already attempting to commit crimes by defrauding you, they don't care about things like the Do Not Call list. If your number shows up on a list of leads, they are going to call it. Because these criminal organizations operate internationally, they have proven difficult to track down and shut down completely. When one is shut down, it seems that more pop up in its place.

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul is trying to change that. The Department of Justice announced recently that Kaul is part of a bipartisan group of 51 attorneys general working with the Federal Communications Commission on new ways to stop these scammers. Included in the planning is new technology making it harder to "spoof" phone numbers; "spoofing" technology allows scammers to make it appear on caller IDs that they are calling from a local number, sometimes a local police department or utility company.

In 2020 alone, Americans lost \$520 million through robocall scams.



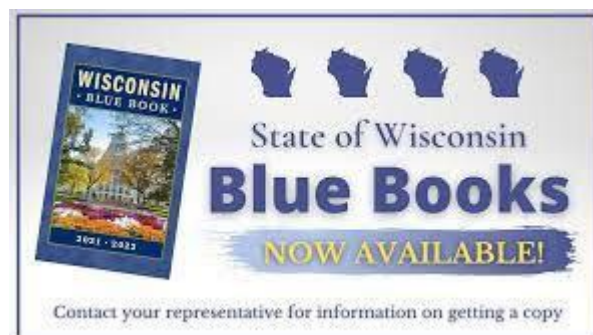
***State's Unemployment Rate Hits Record Low***

The latest numbers released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that Wisconsin's unemployment rate fell to 2.8% in December 2021, a record low. The total number of people in the state who are counted as unemployed also set a new record low of 86,200. Meanwhile the state's Labor Force Participation Rate in December was 66.4%, 4.5 percentage points higher than the national rate of 61.9%



## ***IRS: 2022 Tax Filing Season to Begin January 24***

The federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will start accepting income tax returns for the 2021 tax year on January 24, 2022. The deadline to submit 2021 tax returns or an extension to pay tax owed is Monday, April 18, 2022, for most taxpayers. The IRS Free File computer system will become available on January 14, allowing taxpayers to complete their returns, which will be held until they can be submitted on the 24th. Read more about the 2022 tax filing season [here](#).



## ***Reserve Your Copy of the 2021-2023 State of Wisconsin Blue Book***

The latest edition of the State of Wisconsin Blue Book has arrived. If you would like to have a copy sent to you, contact my office at (608)267-8979 or [sen.wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:sen.wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov). These books are free and contain interesting and valuable information about our state's culture, history and government.