



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

Via Electronic Delivery

January 4, 2021

Dear Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature:

Happy New Year and welcome back after a long break. I hope this letter finds you well and that you and your families were able to enjoy the holidays safely even though we were not able to celebrate the season as we normally would.

Over the past several weeks in my discussions with Republican leaders, I have indicated the imminent need for comprehensive legislation to address the needs of our families, communities, and state so we can continue our response to this pandemic. I have appreciated those conversations and was proud to be able to announce a COVID-19 compromise bill that included provisions on which Republican leaders and I could agree. I was disappointed, however, that this bill was not passed by year's end, and that there has not been any indication about whether or when Wisconsinites can expect this legislation will be taken up.

As we begin a new year and you begin a new legislative session, I write today to ask for your urgent consideration and support of legislation to aid in our state's continued response to COVID-19. I respectfully request that you prioritize the COVID-19 compromise bill—LRB-6592—that I introduced several weeks ago now, and ask that the bill as drafted, which includes provisions agreed upon by Republican leaders and me, be the first bill taken up and passed by both respective houses so it can be sent to my desk without delay. Time is of the essence, and frankly, we cannot delay any longer. It is time to move forward on legislation where there is agreement.

Wisconsinites expect and are counting on perhaps now more than ever a state government that works effectively and efficiently for them. As the pandemic continues to have effects on our small business owners, our workers, students and parents across the state, and every aspect of Wisconsinites' daily lives, it would be inexplicable after more than 260 days of inaction for any other issue or topic to be taken up by the legislature prior to passing a bill to address COVID-19—especially one on which we've already been able to find common ground.

While this proposal is far from perfect, it avoids unworkable, overtly political proposals as well as items my administration has addressed or is already working to address and will help provide support for some of the immediate needs our state faces. LRB-6592 could readily be redrafted for this legislative session, and the Legislature must move forward to find consensus and pass this bill expeditiously.

While I am hopeful this bill will be the first bill passed during this legislative session, I want to be clear that it must only be the first—it is likely more support and additional legislation will be needed.

That is also why I have proposed LRB-6522/6 for your consideration and about which we can have additional, ongoing conversations to provide more support for our state's response to this pandemic as we continue to distribute vaccines as quickly as possible. I am urging legislators to speak to your leaders and your colleagues without delay to find a united, bipartisan approach to address the many outstanding issues impacting our state. I hope you will each consider action on proposals such as ensuring those impacted by COVID-19 aren't evicted from their homes, requiring insurers to cover all telehealth services, easing work search requirements for those who have lost their jobs and can't find new work, waiving the one week waiting period for UI benefits, and making it easier for healthcare workers exposed to COVID-19 to claim workers compensation.

There is much work to be done in 2021 as our communities, our economy, and our state continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and continue working toward our economic recovery.

The people of Wisconsin sent us here because they believe, as do I, that we can and should find common ground. Let's get this done and continue to build upon this first proposal and this first step toward working together to address the needs of our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Tony" on top and "Evers" below it.

Tony Evers
Governor