

Blog Recap: Coronavirus updates from around Wisconsin on Thursday, April 30, 2020

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Updates on the coronavirus and how it's affecting life in Wisconsin from reporters from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin.

Updated Live Blog: [Friday's coverage of coronavirus from around Wisconsin \(/story/news/2020/05/01/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/3063052001/\)](/story/news/2020/05/01/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/3063052001/)

Wednesday Recap: [Facilities have been source of outbreak \(/story/news/2020/04/29/more-than-180-facilities-source-outbreaks/3052419001/\)](/story/news/2020/04/29/more-than-180-facilities-source-outbreaks/3052419001/)

Daily Digest: [What you need to know about coronavirus in Wisconsin \(/story/news/health/2020/04/01/coronavirus-wisconsin-daily-digest/5103281002/\)](/story/news/health/2020/04/01/coronavirus-wisconsin-daily-digest/5103281002/)


More Coverage: [Coronavirus in the U.S. and around the world \(https://www.usatoday.com/news/coronavirus/\)](https://www.usatoday.com/news/coronavirus/)

8:30 p.m.: Sensenbrenner leads effort for local news stimulus

U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican, and U.S. Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat, are leading an effort to provide federal stimulus money to local news publishers and broadcasters.

The two were the top signatures on a letter with 120 cosigners sent Thursday to House leadership asking that local news operations be allowed to qualify as small businesses in the next stimulus package.

Many news organizations are owned by large corporate entities and were not eligible for loans in the first round of the Paycheck Protection Program, the letter said. But publishers and broadcasters often "operate almost entirely locally," Sensenbrenner and Cicilline wrote.

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The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a massive drop in advertising revenue from local businesses. Layoffs and furloughs have been widespread across the news industry (<https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2020/here-are-the-newsroom-layoffs-furloughs-and-closures-caused-by-the-coronavirus/>). Some news outlets, such as Madison's Isthmus, have shuttered entirely (<https://isthmus.com/news/news/Isthmus-closes-03-19-2020/>).

This hardship comes as advertising revenue for local news organizations has been in "economic freefall" for years, Sensenbrenner and Cicilline wrote.

"The nation is at war with COVID-19 and America's local media has not been immune to the effects of the virus on local communities. Local newspapers, radio stations, and television broadcasts play a pivotal role in connecting communities with vital information," Sensenbrenner said in a statement.

"Now, more than ever, local news provides essential information regarding public health and safety, local events, and democracy. Accurate, reliable, and trustworthy sources of information are vital in this time of need," he said.

— *Sophie Carson*

8:15 p.m.: State mistakenly deposits extra \$600 into US Bank accounts

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development on Thursday mistakenly deposited an extra \$600 into the US Bank accounts of some residents receiving unemployment benefits.

The \$600 payments are cash from a federal program (<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/uiben/fpuc/>) meant to supplement weekly state unemployment money. A "technical malfunction," the department said in a statement, caused payments of \$1,200 to be distributed into the accounts.

The statement did not say how many deposits were affected.

To fix the situation, the department removed all federal payments and state unemployment money from the accounts. The department is working with US Bank to put the correct amount of money back into each account "as soon as possible."

Wisconsin began distributing the federal payments Monday and will provide payments retroactively beginning with the week of April 4.

— *Sophie Carson*

7:05 p.m.: South side Walgreens to begin drive-thru testing

Walgreens will open a drive-thru COVID-19 testing site at 620 W. Oklahoma Ave. in Milwaukee starting Friday.

The testing will be by appointment only and only for people who are eligible based on criteria from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, according to the company.

Those seeking a test must fill out an online health screening to make sure they are eligible. That screening is available at [Walgreens.com/Covid19Testing](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/EHGjCzp4WKRKQj88uXUyHN?domain=walgreens.com) (<https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/EHGjCzp4WKRKQj88uXUyHN?domain=walgreens.com>).

The testing will take place outside on the property, and the company's pharmacists will oversee patients' self-administration of tests for the virus. Patients are not to leave their vehicles.

Testing won't cost anything for people meeting the CDC criteria.

— *Alison Dirr*

6:45 p.m.: Packers, Northwestern Mutual, West Bend Mutual Insurance announce donations

Three Wisconsin organizations announced donations Thursday to help the community weather the coronavirus pandemic.

The Green Bay Packers gave \$250,000 in grants to three Green Bay-area hospital systems to purchase personal protective equipment.

Grants of \$83,333 will go to the Bellin Health Foundation, HSHS St. Vincent/St. Mary's Hospital Foundation and Aurora Health Foundation. The donation is part of the Packers' \$1.5 million COVID-19 Community Relief Fund.

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And the Northwestern Mutual Foundation is donating more than \$200,000 to Children's Wisconsin coronavirus efforts.

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The money will go toward the creation, retooling and manufacturing of PPE, including \$100,000 for new lenses for [Controlled Air Purifying Respirators](https://www.medicaldevice-network.com/projects/maxair-capr-system/). (<https://www.medicaldevice-network.com/projects/maxair-capr-system/>)

Northwestern Mutual will also contribute to the efforts of local arts organizations, such as the Milwaukee Ballet and Milwaukee Repertory Theater, as costume-makers sew masks, gowns and other protective gear for hospital workers.

It has also donated \$6,000 in GrubHub meal gift cards to workers and families at the Children's Wisconsin MACC Fund Center.

And West Bend Mutual Insurance Co. has mailed more than 68,000 checks to Wisconsin policyholders. The \$50 checks are meant to "provide some help in these uncertain times," the company said.

West Bend also gave its more than 1,000 associates \$150 bonuses to be used at local businesses, and it has donated \$50,000 each to Feeding America and the Southeast Chapter of the American Red Cross of Wisconsin.

— *Sophie Carson*

5:04 p.m.: ACLU calls for state to extend eviction moratorium

Gov. Tony Evers should extend the [60-day moratorium banning evictions](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2020/03/27/coronavirus-wisconsin-governor-evers-bans-evictions-foreclosures/2914254001/) and foreclosures, the American Civil Liberties Union said in a Thursday statement, a request the governor did not immediately reject.

"It simply doesn't make sense to evict someone from their home when we're telling people it is safest to be at home," because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Evers spokeswoman Melissa Baldauff said in an email.

The eviction and foreclosure moratorium is set to expire May 26, along with the rest of Evers' safer-at-home order.

"The Evers Administration is looking at what options are available to help people going forward," Baldauff added. "That said, the best option is for the Legislature to stand up and do their part by passing long term relief that will help people stay in their homes."

The ACLU letter, signed by Molly Collins of the Wisconsin ACLU, urged Evers to keep the moratorium in place "throughout the state of emergency and stay in effect for at least 45 days afterwards, to prevent mass evictions and the devastating harm that will result from such action."

[Read more here.](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/2020/04/30/aclu-urges-gov-evers-extend-wisconsins-60-day-eviction-ban/3060126001/) (<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/2020/04/30/aclu-urges-gov-evers-extend-wisconsins-60-day-eviction-ban/3060126001/>)

— *Cary Spivak*

4:11 p.m.: State receives more than 200,000 N95 masks from FEMA

Wisconsin has received 230,000 N95 respirator masks from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Gov. Tony Evers announced Thursday.

The state will also receive new equipment to help decontaminate N95 respirator masks, he said.

"I would like to thank FEMA for answering our calls for help with obtaining these critical supplies, which are badly needed by folks working on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19," Evers said in a statement. "Staff at the State Emergency Operations Center has been working tirelessly to acquire PPE, and these masks will be a welcome addition to the supply chain they have worked to establish."

But he added that Wisconsin continues to need "reliable access to PPE."

The state requested supplies from FEMA last month to help protect health care workers and first responders.

The masks will be used to support state operations as well as being distributed to county and tribal emergency managers, who will provide them to care providers and first responders based on current needs.

In early May, FEMA is expected to send technology known as the Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System, which can decontaminate N95 respirator masks.

Health care workers across the state will be able to send their masks to Madison for processing and, once cleaned and sterilized, they will be sent back to the original users, Evers said.

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— Mary Spicuzza

3:50 p.m.: Wisconsin, Milwaukee County record highest daily increases in positive cases

Wisconsin set another record for new COVID-19 cases reported since the day before, with 334 new cases Thursday.

The previous record was set April 25 with 331 new cases. Close to two-thirds of the new cases Thursday were from Milwaukee and Brown counties, the two fastest-growing areas for coronavirus outbreaks in the state.

The total number of positive cases of the coronavirus in Wisconsin now stands at 6,854, with just over a fifth of those individuals requiring hospitalization at some point during their illness. Negative cases numbered 69,394 Thursday, and there were 316 deaths, an increase of eight from Wednesday.

Milwaukee County on Thursday saw its largest-ever daily increase in cases for the second day in a row, with 114 new cases.

The county surpassed 3,000 coronavirus cases with its afternoon update, reporting 3,016 cases — including 2,200 in the city of Milwaukee.

Milwaukee County also reported one new death since its morning update, bringing total deaths to 176. Of those who have died from the virus, 117 were ages 70 and up. Ninety-one victims were black and 72 were white, according to the [county's online dashboard](https://mcoem.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/018eedbe075046779b8062b5fe1055bf) (<https://mcoem.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/018eedbe075046779b8062b5fe1055bf>).

The share of positive cases among all tests jumped too. Of the tests performed Wednesday in Milwaukee County, 31% came back positive, the highest in a month and a half of record-keeping. The previous day, 21% were positive. The county's goal is that 10% or fewer tests are positive.

Statewide, there were 3,098 new tests conducted since Wednesday. With a positive test increase of 334, that's about 10.8% positive, back up from about 7% Wednesday and 9% Tuesday. A 14-day downward trajectory of percent-positive cases is one of the hallmarks of Gov. Tony Evers' reopening plan.

State health officials have said that reopening doesn't depend on a decreasing percentage with each passing day, but rather a downward trend throughout the period.

[Read more here.](#) (/story/news/2020/04/30/wisconsin-again-sets-record-new-coronavirus-cases-334-new-infections/3057854001/)

— Madeline Heim and Sophie Carson

2:16 p.m.: Bucks co-owner believes NBA season will continue, but it'll be a while

Milwaukee Bucks co-owner Marc Lasry [was asked about the NBA season on CNBC's "Halftime Report"](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/30/bucks-co-owner-marc-lasry-said-he-believes-nba-season-will-eventually-resume.html) (<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/30/bucks-co-owner-marc-lasry-said-he-believes-nba-season-will-eventually-resume.html>) on Thursday and said he did believe the league would eventually continue its season and hold its playoffs, but it wouldn't be anytime soon.

"That's going to be a while away," Lasry said. "The question is, is that in July or is that in August? I think we've got to get back to everything being open. A number of (NBA team) facilities are going to open May 8. For somebody like the Bucks, it's going to take longer, just because we have to comply with the stay-at-home, but that's OK. You need to get started. I think some teams will have a little bit of an edge, but that's life."

Several sports outlets have [floated the idea of using Disney World](#) (</story/sports/2020/04/30/robin-lopez-approves-nba-playing-games-disney-world-orlando/3054603001/>) as a central hub for the remaining NBA games.

"What's clear is people want to see sports," Lasry said. "You're seeing it with The Last Dance (documentary on ESPN) where you have record (ratings), you saw it with the NFL Draft where you had record viewers. I think as you have that, people want to see sports. We'll end up finishing the season."

The Milwaukee Bucks, of course, had the best record in the league at the time play was suspended because of the coronavirus outbreak.

— JR Radcliffe

1:14 p.m.: Virginia man asking to be freed from Kenosha County detention center

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A Virginia man who has been held for 28 months pending trial on federal drug charges is asking to be freed from the Kenosha County Detention Center amid an outbreak of COVID-19.

Joseph K. Habib, 30, was indicted on multiple felony counts in January 2018, accused of running a large-scale marijuana operation, according to court records.

He has been detained without bond since January 2018, according to his attorney, Robin Shellow.

During an initial hearing, a judge ordered him detained, saying he was likely to miss court appearances because he has few ties to the Milwaukee area. Since then, several of his co-defendants without ties to Wisconsin have been allowed pre-trial release, according to Shellow.

An outbreak of coronavirus at the Kenosha County jail constitutes a material change in circumstances, Shellow said in a recent court filing.

"This specific, grave, and imminent risk to Habib's health and life at the Kenosha County Detention Center, during pretrial detention, is unreasonable, unfair, contrary to due process, and grossly disproportionate to Habib's THC-related, non-violent alleged acts," she wrote.

Since Shellow filed the document last week, conditions at the jail have worsened.

In a news release Thursday, Sheriff David Beth said five employees with the Kenosha County Sheriff's Office and 79 inmates in the county jail had tested positive for COVID-19.

The government opposes Habib's release.

"Although the government understands Habib's concerns and recognizes the seriousness of COVID-19, the defendant has neither presented new evidence warranting a reopening of his detention hearing nor shown 'compelling reasons' for release," federal prosecutors wrote

- Gina Barton

12:47 p.m.: 79 inmates in Kenosha County Jail test positive

Five employees with the Kenosha County Sheriff's Office and 79 inmates in the county jail have tested positive for COVID-19.

In a news release Thursday, Sheriff David Beth said all 250 of his employees and all 420 inmates at the jail had recently been tested. He did not specify whether the infected employees are deputies or civilian staff.

The sheriff's office has placed infected inmates into "isolation dorms" to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus while employees have been placed on quarantine, according to the release. Inmates are also being provided with masks while corrections staff are required to wear protective equipment.

- Elliot Hughes

11:48 a.m.: Fourteen test positive at Wisconsin Dells dorm

Fourteen residents [at a Wisconsin Dells dormitory for international student workers \(https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2020/04/29/health-officials-investigate-possible-coronavirus-outbreak-wisconsin-dells/3052711001/\)](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2020/04/29/health-officials-investigate-possible-coronavirus-outbreak-wisconsin-dells/3052711001/) have tested positive for the coronavirus, health officials confirmed Thursday.

"They are isolated and their contacts are in quarantine," said Tim Lawther, the health officer for Sauk County.

Mass testing of about 180 residents was conducted on Saturday, and 12 more people tested positive, in addition to two initial cases, Lawther said.

The cluster is linked to Hiawatha Residence Hall, which is described on its website as "Wisconsin Dells Premier Employee Housing" featuring three-to-four person dorms.

— Mary Spicuzza

10:56 a.m.: State prohibits landlords from charging missed-rent penalties

Landlords are prohibited from charging late fees or penalties for missed or late rent payments during the COVID-19 public health emergency, according to an emergency rule issued by the state.

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The order by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection took effect April 25. The agency announced this week that it had issued the

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order.

The ban will be in place until 90 days after the public health emergency is over, the agency said.

"Due to the rapidly changing economic landscape, many people have also had to navigate job losses, furloughs, and layoffs," the consumer protection agency said in a statement. "As a result, their incomes are lower or gone altogether, making it extremely difficult to pay their rent in a timely manner during this public health emergency."

A teleconference hearing on the order will be held May 21.

The ban on fees is in addition to the [60-day eviction moratorium \(/story/news/politics/2020/03/27/coronavirus-wisconsin-governor-evers-bans-evictions-foreclosures/2914254001/\)](/story/news/politics/2020/03/27/coronavirus-wisconsin-governor-evers-bans-evictions-foreclosures/2914254001/) ordered by Gov. Tony Evers on March 27.

— Cary Spivak

10:40 a.m.: Milwaukee restaurants plan Mother's Day takeout

Mother's Day, which falls on May 10, is one of the busiest days in a restaurant's year. Even though dining rooms are closed during this phase of the pandemic, restaurants still will do the cooking for Mom — it's just that Mother's Day meals are to go.

Restaurants have specials for the day, and it's best to reserve early, as orders can sell out well before any deadline. [Check out the list of Milwaukee restaurants who will offer Mother's Day fare. \(/story/entertainment/dining/carol-deptolla/2020/04/30/mothers-day-specials-milwaukee-area-restaurants-doing-takeout/3038343001/\)](/story/entertainment/dining/carol-deptolla/2020/04/30/mothers-day-specials-milwaukee-area-restaurants-doing-takeout/3038343001/)

— Carol Deptolla

10:35 a.m.: Sussex woman gathers shoes for African children

When Sussex resident Roberta Pratt met families in the rural villages of Africa, many of them had no shoes. Or if they did, they were made of tires or some other makeshift material, Pratt said.

"Those (makeshift shoes) were not good on their feet, but they were better than nothing," said Pratt. "Having shoes is big there. If they do not have shoes, they cannot go to school or the parents cannot go to work."

Pratt has volunteered with the Milwaukee-based nonprofit Soles For Jesus for the last five years. Though her mission trip to Africa scheduled for late April was canceled, Pratt has collected more than 250 pairs of shoes through a shoe drive in the last three weeks.

[Read more. \(/story/communities/northwest/news/sussex/2020/04/30/sussex-resident-collects-shoes-soles-jesus-distribute-to-children-in-africa/3038047001/\)](/story/communities/northwest/news/sussex/2020/04/30/sussex-resident-collects-shoes-soles-jesus-distribute-to-children-in-africa/3038047001/)

— Cathy Kozlowicz

10:28 a.m.: Local entertainment industry in dire straits

To ensure the Pabst Theater Group and other independent entertainment venues in Milwaukee survive, Pabst Theater Group CEO Gary Witt is behind an ambitious, unprecedented effort that's lobbying Washington for support.

He's a founding member of the National Independent Venue Association, a new organization representing more than 1,000 venues and promoters in the United States, including 31 in Wisconsin, ranging from smaller Milwaukee venues like Shank Hall, the Cactus Club, the Miramar Theatre and the Cooperage, to larger independent venues like the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts in Brookfield and The Rave.

[Read more. \(/story/entertainment/music/2020/04/30/milwaukee-music-venues-look-washington-survive-life-death/3036175001/\)](/story/entertainment/music/2020/04/30/milwaukee-music-venues-look-washington-survive-life-death/3036175001/)

— Piet Levy

9:54 a.m.: NBA season looking to resume at Disney World?

The NBA is passing around ideas about where teams can play games in isolation once the league is given the OK to resume the season when the threat of coronavirus subsides. Save 90%.

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A place with lots of hotels and multiple basketball courts in a contained area is ideal.

On Wednesday, The Athletic's Shams Charania [reported \(https://twitter.com/ShamsCharania/status/1255629641286594560\)](https://twitter.com/ShamsCharania/status/1255629641286594560) that the NBA is considering a plan to play at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando.

That would be the happiest place on earth for Milwaukee Bucks big men Robin and Brook Lopez. The 32-year-old twins are self-confessed Disney obsessives.

[Read more. \(/story/sports/2020/04/30/robin-lopez-approves-nba-playing-games-disney-world-orlando/3054603001/\)](/story/sports/2020/04/30/robin-lopez-approves-nba-playing-games-disney-world-orlando/3054603001/)

— Ben Steele

7:41 a.m.: Milwaukee County reports 41 new cases in 24 hours

Milwaukee County is approaching 3,000 cases of COVID-19 after 41 new cases were reported between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning, bringing the caseload to 2,938.

Seven more deaths were also reported in the county during the same time period, totaling 175 deaths, according to the county's online coronavirus dashboard.

Hospitalizations, however, remained steady at 164 as of Wednesday, virtually unchanged since April 24.

The dashboard said 25% of the county's ventilators are in use as of Thursday morning, with 55% of intensive care unit beds and 60% of floor beds being occupied.

— Elliot Hughes

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