

Visited on 04/16/2020

Blog Recap: Coronavirus updates from around Wisconsin on Friday through Sunday

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 7:41 a.m. CT March 27, 2020 | Updated 8:49 a.m. CT March 30, 2020



Updates on 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: [Monday's coverage of coronavirus around Wisconsin \(/story/news/2020/03/30/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/5085761002/\)](/story/news/2020/03/30/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/5085761002/)

Blog Recap: [Thursday's coronavirus updates \(/story/news/2020/03/26/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/2914324001/\)](/story/news/2020/03/26/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/2914324001/)

Daily Digest: [What you need to know about coronavirus in Wisconsin \(/story/news/2020/03/09/coronavirus-wisconsin-current-numbers-and-latest-news/4997376002/\)](/story/news/2020/03/09/coronavirus-wisconsin-current-numbers-and-latest-news/4997376002/)

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

9:30 p.m.: Wisconsin restaurant reservations were up — then came coronavirus

Just as many planned to head out for a pint and some food on St. Patrick's day two weeks ago, [Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers told restaurants to close in-house service \(/story/news/politics/2020/03/17/tony-evers-shuts-bars-and-restaurants-limits-gatherings-less-than-10/5069803002/\)](/story/news/politics/2020/03/17/tony-evers-shuts-bars-and-restaurants-limits-gatherings-less-than-10/5069803002/).

Many area restaurants and bars had already shut their doors out of concern for coronavirus spread prior to that edict.

OpenTable, a hospitality software service from Bookings.com, released data on restaurants across the world that use the platform for online and phone reservations as well as walk-ins.

Visited on 04/16/2020

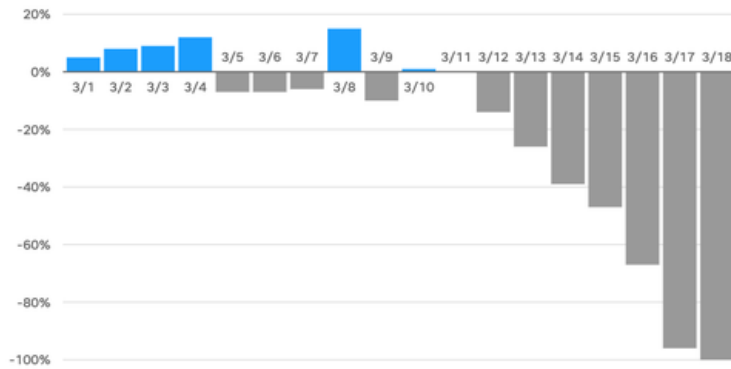
In Wisconsin, dining out had already steadily declined in dining out the week prior to Evers' state-wide closings.

Starting March 8 and 9, Wisconsin restaurants saw a 25% drop in diners at restaurants that use OpenTable's services. From there the decline continued till restaurant dining rooms closed — putting them at a 100% deficit in diners compared to last year at this time.

This data doesn't take into account the many restaurants in the state that are now offering delivery and carry-out services to combat the drop in business. Check our [updating list of restaurants, bars and breweries](https://www.jsonline.com/story/entertainment/dining/2020/03/17/milwaukee-restaurants-and-bars-takeout-delivery-during-coronavirus/5067070002/) in the Milwaukee area that are offering these services.

Dining in, 2020 vs. 2019

Percent change in the number of seated diners vs. the same dates in 2019



Source: [OpenTable](#)
Last updated: March 22, 2020

Dining out in Wisconsin before and after Gov. Tony Evers' order that restricted gatherings (Photo: Erin Caughey)

See more of how coronavirus is affecting Wisconsin on [our updating data and charts page](https://projects.jsonline.com/topics/coronavirus/by-the-numbers/how-coronavirus-is-affecting-wisconsin.html) (<https://projects.jsonline.com/topics/coronavirus/by-the-numbers/how-coronavirus-is-affecting-wisconsin.html>).

—Erin Caughey

7:23 p.m.: Waukesha County announces employee has died from coronavirus

Waukesha County announced the death of a county employee due to COVID-19.

"We are very saddened to learn of the death of one of our employees today. My heart goes out to the family and loved ones of this individual," said County Executive Paul Farrow in a statement.

He noted that the employee did not work with members of the public.

It is unclear at this time whether the county employee is the same person whose death was reported by the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office on Sunday morning.

—Maria Perez

5:50 p.m. Mayor Barrett says outbreak is still hitting northern neighborhoods hard; outlines priorities for federal funds

Mayor Tom Barrett told reporters Sunday that both the county and the city are seeing a continued rise in coronavirus cases, which as of the 4 p.m. call stood at 609 and 478, respectively.

"We're continuing to see cases throughout the county, but a disproportionate impact in the city, particularly on the northern part of the city," Barrett

Visited on 04/16/2020

said. "It's hitting a lot of the neighborhoods on the northern part of the city very, very hard."

Barrett said the city would continue to push the importance of social distancing and adhering to [the governor's "safer at home" order \(/story/news/politics/2020/03/23/wisconsin-gov-evers-order-what-nonessential-essential-wisconsin-businesses/2898162001/\)](#) with residents.

The mayor also said he's been in contact with legislators in Congress about the federal funding coming to Milwaukee, and meeting with his staff to plan how they would allocate those dollars in conjunction with county and state efforts.

Barrett said the top priorities will be to secure more resources for the health care system to boost testing efforts and faster identify and isolate individuals who are positive.

The second priority will be to work with financial institutions to help support local businesses and to address the economic hardships being created by the outbreak.

—Devi Shastri

5:45 p.m.: City leaders say they are short more than 1,000 poll workers for April 7 primary election

In a call with reporters Sunday, Mayor Tom Barrett addressed concerns about staffing and logistics for the April 7 primary election, noting the number of poll workers has dropped day by day.

"Very, very, very reliable poll workers have — literally sometimes dozens by the hour — have dropped out in coming back to us," Barrett said.

That includes chief inspectors, who run the polling site, Barrett said.

Barrett said the loss of workers is creating a major problem and he has contacted state legislators asking them to make the primary by mail only.

In a statement Sunday, Neil Albrecht, executive director of the Milwaukee Election Commission, said the decline in the number of poll workers has left the commission to consider consolidating aldermanic districts into "voting centers" to serve many more people in once place.

It's an option Albrecht said he was not comfortable with, "but this is where the inaction of the Wisconsin Legislature has left the public: potentially putting themselves at risk in order to exercise their constitutional right to vote."

"The math is simple," Albrecht said. "We would normally operate our 180 sites with a minimum of 1,400 election workers. As of today, we have less than 400. We will not be able to maintain our longstanding tradition of neighborhood-based voting for this election."

Milwaukeeans can still request absentee ballots by applying online at [myvote.wi.gov \(https://myvote.wi.gov\)](https://myvote.wi.gov) or at a [drive-up voting site \(/picture-gallery/news/2020/03/28/drive-up-voting-milwaukee-draws-steady-stream-cars/2933272001/\)](#) at the Frank P. Ziedler Municipal Building, 841 N. Broadway. Absentee ballots can be requested until April 2.

Related: [How to get an absentee ballot in Wisconsin \(/story/news/politics/2020/03/13/coronavirus-wisconsin-how-vote-absentee-amid-outbreak/5042700002/\)](#)

Drive-up voting will continue through April 5: weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

—Devi Shastri

5:30 p.m.: Milwaukee heads outside despite gloomy weather, social distancing

On Sunday afternoon, people in downtown Milwaukee enjoyed time outside despite temperatures in the 40s and on-and-off sprinkles.

For some, like Milwaukee resident Amber Hester, it's the only way to get out now that coronavirus has closed non-essential business.

"I live in an apartment building, so I guess I could stand outside the front, but I don't have a yard or anything," Hester said.

At Bradford Beach, people sat in pairs or by themselves, watching waves roll by. Most seemed to be distancing themselves six feet from one another on the damp sand.

Visited on 04/16/2020



A family keeps their distance from others on Bradford Beach in Milwaukee on Saturday, March 28, 2020. (Photo: Rick Wood, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

"We live together, so obviously we can be outside together," Dan Kotowski said, who was walking with his wife near the beach. "We've pretty much stayed six feet from others, except for maybe that brief moment when you walk past someone."

As cities like Chicago have locked down lakefront trails to stop people from disobeying social distancing orders, Milwaukeeans hope trails stay open.

"I'd be sad, but at the same time I would understand," said Rachel Malone, who was walking the Oak Leaf Trail.

She uses the trail to run and takes her dog to other trails in the area.

"I was at a state park, Lapham Peak, yesterday, and it was packed, so I initially was worried, Malone said. "But people were being respectful in staying far enough behind other groups."

She said she is enjoying her time outside while she can.

"I'm worried they are going to make an order for no more walking around leisurely, so I'm like getting outside every day," she said.

—Jordyn Noennig

5:15 p.m.: Wisconsin Elections Commission won't investigate Milwaukee, Dane clerks

The Wisconsin Elections Commission will not investigate Milwaukee and Dane county clerks for telling residents that they can vote absentee without showing an ID if they can't provide one due to the coronavirus epidemic.

The Commission split along party lines, with the three Republican members — Marge Bostelmann, Dean Knudson and Robert F. Spindell — voting in favor of the investigation, and the three Democrats — Julie M. Glancey, Mark L. Thomsen and Ann S. Jacobs — voting against.

Both Dane and Milwaukee County clerks have encouraged voters who request absentee ballots are not able to upload a photo ID to declare themselves "indefinitely confined." That would allow them to vote without uploading an ID.

Milwaukee County Clerk George Christenson wrote in a letter that the option exists to preserve everyone's right to vote.

Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell gave the same guidance.

The Republican Party of Wisconsin accused the clerks of "illegally rigging an election."

Andrew Hitt, chairman of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, said the clerks were willfully ignoring state statutes and deemed the move as an "outrageous assault on our democratic process and Wisconsin's election laws."

Visited on 04/16/2020

Rick Esenberg, the president of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, a conservative legal group, also criticized the decision. He said in a statement that clerks may not change the law or use the pandemic to evade the requirement for photo ID.

—*Maria Perez*

4:50 p.m.: Seminary building will house some who have coronavirus symptoms in Milwaukee

Starting Monday, Clare Hall on the grounds of the Saint Francis de Sales Seminary will be used to provide temporary shelter for people experiencing housing instability who have coronavirus symptoms or who face the most risk from the virus' spread.

People who have symptoms will be separated from the people who do not, said James Mathy, housing administrator for the Milwaukee County Housing Division. He said there is a controlled intake process and members of the public cannot show up at the facility.

There is an approximately 110-room capacity but officials do not know how many rooms they will end up using.

Clare Hall was built in 1955 and sits behind the seminary. Once known as Heiss Hall, it originally housed seminarians until about 1989, when it was leased to the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi for use as a home for retired sisters, said Amy Grau, spokeswoman for the Archdiocese.

Buy Photo 



Clare Hall at 3470 S. Illinois Ave. in Milwaukee. (Photo: Michael Sears/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

It remained a retirement home until about a year ago, and the building was empty when the Milwaukee Health Department reached out about using it, she said.

Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI said in a statement Sunday that allowing the use of the facility was "simply the right thing to do" and "aligns with our call to 'love one another.'"

"Clare Hall is located on the grounds of our Seminary, which has been preparing men for the priesthood since the mid-nineteenth century," he said. "What better example for those studying for the priesthood than for us to reach out to the most vulnerable?"

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said Sunday that creating "strong partnerships to address the needs of the community" is one of the most important things to do right now.

"And, fortunately in this case, the Archdiocese and the sisters have stepped forward and very, very graciously offered to work with the city and the county and St. Francis to use a facility that is not being currently used," he said.

—*Alison Dirr*

3:35 p.m.: Wisconsin begins distributing masks, respirators to communities

The state has gotten about half of the personal protection equipment (PPE) Gov. Tony Evers requested two weeks ago for Wisconsin from the Strategic

Visited on 04/16/2020

National Stockpile.

The governor said equipment began to be distributed this weekend to local communities. The state has also requested supplies from FEMA for first responders and health care workers.

Evers requested from the Strategic National Stockpile: 54,709 respirators, 130,326 surgical masks, 24,816 face shields, 20,233 surgical gowns, 104 coveralls and 72,044 gloves.

"At the same time, we have continued to work at the state and regional level to purchase supplies and equipment, including PPE, testing supplies, and ventilators," Evers tweeted Sunday afternoon.

"Wisconsin is competing not just with other states and the federal government but with the entire world to get these supplies — this is a global crisis."

- Meg Jones

3:15 p.m.: 1,153 confirmed cases in Wisconsin

Wisconsin's number of confirmed cases of coronavirus reached 1,153 on Sunday, 112 cases more than Saturday.

Milwaukee County reported 606 cases and Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported 547 in other counties.

The total number of cases reported by Wisconsin DHS is 1,112, three times more than a week ago. More than 16,500 people tested negative for the virus, according to DHS.

Milwaukee County reported a new death on Sunday, bringing the total number of confirmed deaths due to coronavirus in the state of Wisconsin to 18.

— Maria Perez

9:30 a.m.: A 71-year-old Milwaukee man died Sunday morning

The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office reported the death of a 71-year-old African American man due to complications from the coronavirus.

The man also had other underlying health conditions.

All 10 of those who have died in Milwaukee County after contracting coronavirus are African American. The largest concentrations of the outbreak are in parts of the city with the most African American residents, health officials have said.

Wisconsin has a total of 18 deaths due to the coronavirus as of Sunday morning.

- Jordyn Noennig

9 a.m.: Milwaukee County reporting 559 coronavirus cases

Milwaukee County added an additional 18 new coronavirus cases as of Sunday morning. Overall, 559 people within the county have tested positive for the virus.

The state topped 1,000 cases on Saturday; more than 15,000 people have tested negative statewide.

Milwaukee County has reported an average of 50 new cases a day for the last 10 days.

- Jordyn Noennig

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

8:27 p.m.: Evers, Republicans clash over purchase of ventilators

Gov. Tony Evers' administration is purchasing 10,000 ventilators and 1 million protective masks after clashing with Republican lawmakers over whether the governor had the power to make the purchases.

Visited on 04/16/2020

Evers gave legislative leaders a bill a week ago that called for spending more than \$700 million to help care for thousands of sick and jobless people, and on Friday his administration warned that delaying the legislation could have "catastrophic consequences" for Wisconsin as coronavirus spreads.

But top Republicans said Saturday that Evers was the one holding back the state's response and that he should have already used authority he has to buy the lifesaving equipment. They said they were working on their own proposal.

Much of the money under Evers' plan would give state agencies the power to buy ventilators, masks and other equipment, and to hire more staff to process an unprecedented number of unemployment claims and trace the contacts made by infected patients, the administration said.

Read more here.

- Molly Beck and Patrick Marley

3:40 p.m.: 'Jump Around' brings neighbors together

Inspired by those in Italy singing together from their balconies, two Sun Prairie residents decided to try the Wisconsin version: a neighborhood "Jump Around," PBS Wisconsin reported.

Greg Thomson and Joe Lahti rallied their neighbors to participate in the Wisconsin Badgers tradition at the same time in their respective yards, keeping a safe distance apart. They told PBS Wisconsin they're thinking about making it a weekly event.

— Rory Linnane



2:45 p.m.: Wisconsin coronavirus cases break 1,000

Wisconsin's confirmed cases of coronavirus reached 1,041 Saturday.

Milwaukee County reported 541 cases while the state Department of Health Services reported 500 in other counties.

The state did not report any new deaths Saturday. However, several Wisconsin counties independently reported deaths due to COVID-19, bringing the state's total to 17.

More than 15,000 people have tested negative for the virus.

Many counties this week had their first confirmed cases of COVID-19, including Waupaca, Portage, Juneau, Vilas and Iron, among others. As of Saturday afternoon, 42 Wisconsin counties have confirmed cases of coronavirus.

— Natalie Brophy and Rory Linnane

1:15 p.m.: Big turnout for Milwaukee's drive-up early voting

Cars were wrapped around City Hall Saturday as city residents took advantage of Milwaukee's drive-up early voting effort.

The city launched the drive-up option to give residents the opportunity to vote in person but with a lower risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Visited on 04/16/2020

Every poll worker donned a neon vest and gloves, some wore masks when handing out ballots to voters in cars.

"They were doing everything they could to keep everything sanitized," Susan Rekowski said. "They're wearing gloves and masks and I appreciate that."

Election staffers are going to voters' vehicles to review their photo identifications and issue, secure and witness their absentee ballots.

Robert "Bo" Johnson decided it would be safer for him to do the curbside vote.

"I felt like as long as the opportunity was available, who knows what things are going to be like two weeks from now when we're supposed to be going to the polling places," Johnson said.

Neil Albrecht, executive director for the City of Milwaukee Election Commission, said the first 90 minutes of early voting were busy but since then things were moving smoothly.

Voters were able to stop in reserved parking spaces along East Kilbourn Avenue between Market Street and North Broadway and along Broadway between Kilbourn Avenue and East Wells Street.

The site will be open on Saturdays and Sundays before the election from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., and from Monday through Friday 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Early voting will end on April 5.

— *Ricardo Torres*

12:55 p.m.: Waupaca County reports its first confirmed COVID-19 death

A person in Waupaca County has died due to COVID-19, the county health department said Saturday.

It is the same person who was the county's first confirmed case of the coronavirus, which the Waupaca County Department of Health and Human Services announced Wednesday.

The person was under self-quarantine as of Wednesday. Health officials did not release any additional details about the person who died, including gender, age, where he or she lived or if he or she had any underlying medical conditions.

"We are saddened by this death and our hearts go out to the family, friends, and community," Public Health Officer Jed Wohlt said. "We strongly encourage our residents to stay safer at home unless activities are essential. That is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of our community."

10:25 a.m.: More than 100,000 Wisconsinites filed for unemployment this week

More than 100,000 people in Wisconsin have filed to receive unemployment benefits so far this week, numbers from the state Department of Workforce Development show.

Another 18,386 applications were filed on Friday, bringing the week's total to 108,000.

Friday was the fifth straight day that the number of people filing for unemployment benefits was at or above 18,000.

During the same period in 2019, there were 5,640 claims filed.

Since March 15, more than 177,000 unemployment claims have been filed in Wisconsin amid a broad shutdown of businesses that is designed to blunt the spread of COVID-19.

— *Joe Taschler*

8:30 a.m.: Wisconsin could see more than \$2 billion in coronavirus stimulus

Wisconsin and its largest metro areas could receive more than \$2 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act passed by Congress this week, according to a new memo released by the state's Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Most of that would go to the state, it said; however large sums would also go to Milwaukee, Milwaukee County and Dane County, all of which have

Visited on 04/16/2020

populations of more than 500,000.

Based on its 2019 population, the fiscal bureau said, Wisconsin could receive almost \$2.26 billion. Because of their large shares of the state population, the City of Milwaukee could receive an estimated \$102.7 million, Milwaukee County an estimated \$164.5 million, and Dane County an estimated \$93.4 million.

In all, it said, that amounts to \$360.6 million, or approximately 16% of the state's total estimated federal aid. The rest of the federal funds, almost \$1.9 billion, would be available to the state government.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, issued a statement urging Gov. Tony Evers to use the funds to “enhance health care so no one goes without care” and “help those most affected by the shutdown.”

“These dollars must be used to help acquire ventilators and more personal protection equipment as well as help public health departments and health care providers all over the state,” he said.

— *Patrick Marley and Annysa Johnson*

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

8:12 a.m.: Number of coronavirus cases in Milwaukee County nears 500

Milwaukee County is approaching 500 confirmed cases of coronavirus. It reported 496 cases early Saturday morning. The majority of the cases, 392, are in the city of Milwaukee. Milwaukee County reported its ninth coronavirus death on Friday night, the 16th in the state.

As of Friday afternoon, there had been 468 confirmed cases.

— *Mike Johnson*

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

8:40 p.m.: 55-year-old Milwaukee woman dies from coronavirus

Milwaukee County reported its ninth coronavirus death, the 16th in the state.

A 55-year-old Milwaukee woman died Thursday afternoon shortly after arriving at a hospital, according to the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office. A test for coronavirus came back positive Friday.

The medical examiner said the woman died from complications due to the virus.

Including the woman reported today, four Milwaukee County residents died Thursday from the virus.

All nine of those who have died in Milwaukee County after contracting coronavirus are African American. The largest concentrations of the outbreak are in parts of the city with the most African American residents, health officials have said.

— *Sophie Carson*

7:30 p.m.: UW-Madison tells spring break travelers they must self-quarantine

University of Wisconsin-Madison students have returned from spring break trips and tested positive for the coronavirus, a school health official said in a letter Friday.

It was not clear how many students tested positive. But Dr. Patrick Kelly, the interim director for University Health Services, said all students who traveled for spring break must self-quarantine for 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms.

The students should not go to work or travel anywhere else, Kelly said.

"Due to limited test availability, you are unlikely to be tested for COVID-19 but you should follow all the recommendations of your healthcare provider," Kelly said.

Visited on 04/16/2020

— Sophie Carson

6:10 p.m.: MPD receives hand sanitizer donation from El Rey

El Rey Foods donated hand sanitizer to the Milwaukee Police Department Friday.

Company employees and police officers unloaded several boxes of hand sanitizer bottles, which will be distributed to throughout the police department.

The department asked anyone who would like to donate personal protective equipment to email supportMPD@milwaukee.gov for a list of needed supplies.

— Sophie Carson



Two Milwaukee police officers pose for a photo Friday alongside a donation of hand sanitizer from El Rey Foods. (Photo: Courtesy of Milwaukee Police)

5:50 p.m.: Milwaukee to begin drive-up early voting Saturday

On Saturday, a “drive-up” early voting option will begin in the City of Milwaukee outside the Zeidler Municipal Building, 841 N. Broadway.

Election staffers will go to voters’ vehicles to review their photo identifications and issue, secure and witness their absentee ballots.

Voters will be able to stop in reserved parking spaces along East Kilbourn Avenue between Market Street and North Broadway and along Broadway between Kilbourn Avenue and East Wells Street.

The site will be open on Saturdays and Sundays before the election from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., and from Monday through Friday 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Early voting will end on April 5.

The city previously closed its in-person early voting sites at Zablocki Library, the Zeidler Municipal Building or the Midtown Center because the city’s Election Commission couldn’t keep sufficient staffing levels due to coronavirus concerns.

— Alison Dirr

5:15 p.m.: Waukesha County Huber inmates cannot leave for work release

Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson on Friday announced he was suspending work release for inmates at the county’s Huber facility.

The move will mean about 90 inmates will no longer be coming and going into the community, where they could possibly contract COVID-19 and then return and expose other inmates and staff, or spread the virus in the community if they’ve contracted at the facility.

In his order, Severson noted that jail duties “from time immemorial” fall to sheriffs, and that it was his constitutional prerogative to suspend work release.

Visited on 04/16/2020

The order is effective Friday night and lasts a month, unless revoked or modified.

On Tuesday, Waukesha Chief Judge Jennifer Dorow ordered that Severson supply her a list of all the Huber inmates so officials could look for those who might safely be released early or on electronic monitoring. Neither she nor the sheriff have said how many inmates that effort was able to move out of the Huber center, 1400 Northview Road in Waukesha. But the jail's daily list of all inmates at both the jail and the Huber center showed there were 107 listed Huber inmates on Monday, and 92 on Friday morning.

Anthony Cotton, a Waukesha attorney and former president of the Wisconsin Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, disagreed with the sheriff's approach.

"Everyone confined to a county jail is at an extremely high risk of infection," Cotton said. "Inmates in the Huber facility should be locked out, not locked in, during this outbreak."

— *Bruce Vielmetti*

4:35 p.m.: New Evers order to simplify nurse licensing process

Gov. Tony Evers on Friday issued another order as part of the state's response to the coronavirus outbreak, which has resulted in the deaths of 15 people in Wisconsin so far.

Evers' order simplifies health care license renewals during the public health emergency and encourages recently retired health care workers with expired licenses to re-enter the field. It also allows licensed practitioners living outside Wisconsin to work in Wisconsin without first obtaining a Wisconsin license, and eliminates time limits on temporary licenses.

The order also helps health care systems use students in nursing school who are close to graduation, physician assistants and advanced practice nurses more effectively during the public health emergency.

Evers and state health officials have ordered Wisconsin residents to stay inside their homes, and ordered the closure of many businesses, to limit movement in the state in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. Without the orders, state health officials say, the state's health care system will be overwhelmed.

Read more here.

— *Molly Beck*

4:30 p.m.: Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility goes into lockdown

The Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility downtown was on lockdown today after a staff member tested positive for COVID-19.

The Department of Corrections, which operates the downtown institution, announced on its website that two staff members of the department's Milwaukee region community corrections office have also tested positive.

So far, neither the Milwaukee County Jail nor the House of Correction in Franklin have reported any staff or inmates being infected with the coronavirus. Two inmates have tested positive at the Dane County Jail in Madison and six others have shown symptoms and are being isolated within that facility, the Wisconsin State Journal reported.

The Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility holds more than 1,000 state prisoners, many of whom are being held for violating conditions of extended supervision or probation.

The county jail, like most in the area, has worked to release inmates who pose the least risk to the community and high risks of contracting more dangerous cases of COVID-19, either on electronic monitoring or additional bail conditions. Others who were close to completing sentences have also been released. The idea is to reduce the overall number of inmates and space for those who might need isolation.

Health officials have warned that the coronavirus can spread very quickly among an incarcerated population, which has generally poorer health and opportunity for social distancing.

— *Bruce Vielmetti*

Visited on 04/16/2020

3:22 p.m.: Milwaukee County clerk joins chorus seeking mail-only election

Milwaukee County Clerk George Christenson and the county's 19 municipal election clerks on Friday called on state officials to pass legislation to hold the April 7 election only by mail.

They also called on Gov. Tony Evers, state Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald and state Assembly Speaker Robin Vos to allow absentee ballots to be processed starting April 4.

The letter states that the changes would address a shortage of poll workers and protect Wisconsin residents' health.

"We cannot emphasize enough that right now we do not have the ability to conduct a safe election in Milwaukee County," the letter states. "We are dedicated public servants and we will absolutely do our best, but we need your help. We ask you to take immediate action so that our citizens do not face the choice of losing their cherished right to vote or risking their health."

It says that in addition to a "devastating loss of election workers" and risks for poll workers who are over 60 years old, there are insufficient supplies to keep polling locations clean and sanitary. Milwaukee and other municipalities have also had to close or "greatly reduce" access to early voting, and "several" municipalities have consolidated polling locations, which will cause larger crowds on April 7, they wrote.

The letter also states that "enabling election officials to begin processing absentee ballots through election equipment prior to Election Day will produce better election results."

They cited the increased number of absentee ballots that need to be processed due to the pandemic.

"Based on the anticipated volume of absentee ballots it is possible that many communities will not be able to process all of the ballots by the closing time of the polls," the letter states. "This will add un-needed stress to election workers and clerks, it will delay results, and may result in errors."

— Alison Dirr

3:19 p.m.: Stimulus package gets support of all Wisconsin US Reps

The \$2 trillion stimulus package passed by voice vote in the U.S. House Friday had the support of every member of Congress from Wisconsin.

Two were present in the Capitol for the voice vote and spoke from the House floor: Republicans Bryan Steil and Glenn Grothman.

Others stayed away for health reasons or, like many members of Congress, elected not to travel back to Washington from their home districts amid a pandemic in which experts are warning against air travel.

Read more.

— Craig Gilbert

3:15 p.m.: Wisconsin's confirmed cases have doubled in less than a week

Wisconsin's confirmed cases of the coronavirus have doubled in less than a week, but the state's top health official cautioned Friday that a sharp increase doesn't mean staying home isn't working.

Friday's total of 842 positive cases was more than twice the total Monday, and 15 people had died of COVID-19 in Wisconsin by midday.

That rise may be due to the lag time of symptoms in patients who likely contracted coronavirus before Gov. Tony Evers' safer-at-home and school-closure orders, said Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary-designee Andrea Palm in a briefing with reporters Friday.

"It will likely be several weeks before we're able to see the results of those efforts," Palm said.

Read more here.

— Mica Soellner

2:55 p.m.: Handgun sales topped Black Friday 4 days straight

Visited on 04/16/2020

Handgun sales in Wisconsin topped Black Friday levels for four consecutive days during the coronavirus buying frenzy, according to the state Department of Justice.

That's a level more than five times normal.

The DOJ conducts background checks for every attempted handgun purchase in the state, and they registered an average of 380 checks per day last year.

But those requests topped 1,000 every day from March 13 through at least this Tuesday, peaking at more than 2,700 on Saturday and Sunday. That ended a four-day run above the Black Friday 2019 mark of 2,152.

Handgun sales

Background check requests for Wisconsin handgun purchases



Source: Wisconsin Department of Justice

Last updated: March 25, 2020

Wisconsin handgun sales as of March 27, 2020 (Photo: Eric Litke)

See more of how coronavirus is affecting Wisconsin on [our updating data and charts page \(https://projects.jsonline.com/topics/coronavirus/by-the-numbers/how-coronavirus-is-affecting-wisconsin.html\)](https://projects.jsonline.com/topics/coronavirus/by-the-numbers/how-coronavirus-is-affecting-wisconsin.html).

—Eric Litke

2:22 p.m.: Evers calls Milwaukee cases 'a crisis within a crisis'

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers on Friday voiced concern about the growing number of confirmed cases in Milwaukee, particularly among the city's African American community, calling it "a crisis within a crisis." He urged Wisconsinites to take the stay-at-home order seriously.

All eight of those who died in Milwaukee County after contracting coronavirus are African American.

- Mary Spicuzza

1:25 p.m.: More data needed to compare Milwaukee COVID numbers to other cities

Wisconsin public health officials are reporting more than 700 residents have tested positive for the coronavirus, with 420 of them in Milwaukee County.

Those are important numbers to be sure — but there are key figures that are not being reported, here and across the country. Testing volume and availability varies dramatically between areas, and the data on negative or pending tests is sometimes spotty.

Experts warn that severe restrictions in coronavirus testing in Wisconsin and across the U.S. mean that they have no idea the true number of those infected. As a result, it's difficult to make meaningful comparisons of the severity of the outbreak across locations.

Visited on 04/16/2020

Despite the missing data, some organizations have tried to compare COVID-19 positive cases in different cities, such as Portland, Oregon-based think-tank City Observatory.

The group released a report this week that said Milwaukee was in the top six metropolitan areas based on the number of positive coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents. City Observatory was citing data from USAFacts, a nonpartisan organization examining government data.

That report was cited by some media in Milwaukee.

Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton was set to have a news conference on COVID-19 at 1:30 p.m. Friday.

In a news release, Hamilton said he will warn Milwaukee residents of "the consequences of not obeying the coronavirus (COVID-19) city and state Stay-at-Home order," saying people who do not comply may be arrested.

Hamilton did not cite the City Observatory report but said in a news release, "Milwaukee is, unfortunately, one of the top five places in the U.S. where the virus is spreading the fastest."

In the City Observatory report, metro areas like Phoenix ranked near the bottom. But consider this: Arizona has around 600 positive cases, Wisconsin around 700.

Yet Wisconsin has tested nearly 13,000 residents for the virus, while Arizona has tested fewer than 7,000, despite being a more populous state. Experts warn it's also difficult to compare a city like Milwaukee to Houston or Phoenix or New York, places with different demographic makeups, population densities and responses to the virus.

- *Daphne Chen, John Diedrich and Eric Litke*

12:20 p.m.: Milwaukee concerts now being affected in August

Big Milwaukee concerts through August are now affected by coronavirus

Pink Floyd legend Roger Waters is the latest music superstar to scrap touring plans because of the pandemic.

But the news will be especially jarring to music fans in Milwaukee. His Fiserv Forum show wasn't slated to happen until Aug. 22.

"If it saves one life, it's worth it," Waters said in a statement. His tour was scheduled to begin July 8 in Pittsburgh.

The tour will now take place in 2021, with specific dates to be announced. All previously purchased tickets will be honored.

The announcement is the latest indication that even the summer concert season is going to be affected by the pandemic.

On Monday, Summerfest officials postponed the Big Gig from June 24 to July 5 to Sept. 3 to 5, 10 to 12 and 17 to 19. Officials have not specified if any of the 32 previously announced artists will perform in September but said there will be more information in the coming weeks.

Other big Milwaukee shows this spring affected by the coronavirus this week include Latin superstar Ozuna's April Fiserv Forum appearance (which is canceled) and an April stop for Omarion's "The Millennium Tour," which has been rescheduled for Aug. 9 at the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena.

— *Piet Levy*

11:50 a.m.: Another nearly 20,000 unemployment claims made Thursday

Wisconsin processed another 19,489 claims for unemployment benefits Thursday, the fourth straight day that the number has been at or near 20,000.

For the week that began Sunday, the total number of applications processed by the state stands at nearly 90,000.

At this point during the same week in 2019, there were 4,664 applications processed.

Since March 15, the number of unemployment applications filed in Wisconsin is nearly 160,000.

The COVID-19 virus and resulting stay-at-home orders and orders limiting restaurants and bars to take-out only have caused many businesses to simply shut down.

Visited on 04/16/2020

Some of the shutdowns are temporary, but others are likely permanent as the pandemic continues to take a toll on the state's economy.

— *Joe Taschler*

11:42 a.m.: Second Northwoods county confirms first case of COVID-19

The Oneida County Health Department confirmed Friday morning that one person in the county tested positive for the new coronavirus.

The person is in their 20s and has a known history of travel, according to the Health department. They are in isolation and have "been very compliant."

County health officials are contacting people with whom the patient had close contact in order to determine how the person became infected.

An Iron County resident died after becoming the first confirmed case of the virus in the county and marked the first death in northern Wisconsin from the virus.

— *Megan Stringer*

10:11 a.m.: Two more deaths at Ozaukee County long-term care facility

Two more residents of an Ozaukee County long-term care facility for seniors have died after testing positive for COVID-19.

The patients were residents of Village Pointe Commons in Grafton, where a 91-year-old man died a week ago after contracting the coronavirus.

A news release from the Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department did not provide any additional information about the two new deaths.

The Health Department ordered a lockdown of all long-term care facilities in both Washington and Ozaukee counties after the first patient's death. A medical unit with the National Guard has also assisted with staffing at Village Pointe Commons.

A person in Iron County died from the coronavirus, the Iron County Health Department said. It was the first confirmed case of the virus in the county and marked the first death in northern Wisconsin.

Read more.

— *Elliot Hughes*

10:04 a.m.: CDC officials in Milwaukee studying how virus spreads

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials are in Milwaukee this week working to study how the coronavirus is spread, Milwaukee Health Commissioner Jeanette Kowalik said.

The CDC is the nation's lead health protection agency.

The CDC teams are helping with a study about the "secondary attack rate," or the number of cases that occur within the incubation period following exposure to a primary positive coronavirus case.

Read more.

— *Mary Spicuzza*

9:40 a.m.: Curbside brush collection won't begin April 1

The Milwaukee Department of Public Works is suspending its curbside brush collection that was slated to start April 1 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The department has its field staff working in smaller numbers and concentrating on essential services.

Drop-off centers are accepting brush and branches for free, and those drop-offs do not require in-person contact.

Grass clippings, weeds, garden debris and other yard debris should be composted or "grass cycled" or brought to a drop-off center.

— *Alison Dirr*

Visited on 04/16/2020

9:38 a.m.: Barrett: Asian American community concerned about being scapegoated

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said in a statement Friday that the Asian American community is concerned about being scapegoated and targeted in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"In this time of heightening tensions, there are serious concerns in the Asian American community about scapegoating and becoming the targets of misplaced fear and anger," Barrett said in a statement released after he met virtually with members and leaders of the Asian American community. "I oppose any expressions of racism and xenophobia at all levels. No one should live in fear because of who they are, what they look like, or where they come from."

He pushed for using official names for the pandemic, "especially if there is potential to do harm."

— *Alison Dirr*

9:22 a.m.: Sam Dekker's journey home to United States continues

Former University of Wisconsin basketball star Sam Dekker has been on an abrupt and obstacle-laden journey back to the United States from Russia, where he was playing professionally. He said he's now on a plane headed to the United States from Turkey. Follow his journey so far.

— *Tom Dombek*

7:38 a.m.: Milwaukee County has more than 400 confirmed cases

Milwaukee County now has more than 400 confirmed cases of the coronavirus.

Twenty-seven new cases were reported on the county's online dashboard Friday morning, for a total of 420 cases. The death toll jumped to eight after three county residents died from the virus Thursday.

The City of Milwaukee reported another 28 cases, totaling 332, with the north side continuing as the county's epicenter for the spread of the virus.

West Allis (15), Wauwatosa (13) and Oak Creek (11) topped the suburban communities for confirmed cases.

Milwaukee's first coronavirus victim, former firefighter Lawrence Riley, was an "iron man."

— *Elliot Hughes*

7:09 a.m.: A look at the four lawsuits filed over the April 7 election

If you missed it last night, here's a full rundown of the various lawsuits asking for changes to the April 7 election in light of the health crisis.

— *Patrick Marley*

Read or Share this story: <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2020/03/27/coronavirus-wisconsin-latest-updates-cases-cancellations/2924044001/>