

Wisconsin Primaries takes place amidst Coronavirus Pandemic – Putting Thousands At Risk

Wisconsin held primary elections on Tuesday in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, even though the Centers for Disease Control recommends practicing social distancing and staying indoors whenever possible. Despite those recommendations, the president has yet to enact an executive stay at home order, and stay at home orders are currently up to the ruling of each individual state.

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In Wisconsin, an executive order was put into place by Tony Evers on April 6th, postponing their primary election. However, the executive order was overturned Monday night by the Wisconsin supreme court. Additionally, the WI supreme court overturned a ruling that would extend the deadline for absentee ballot voting despite concerns that a surplus of absentee ballot requests would keep voters from receiving their absentee ballot in time for the election.

Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images

People are being forced to risk their lives to place their vote or fulfill their right as an American to vote. It's just unbelievable that we are even having this conversation right now,"

-Milwaukee Health commissioner Jennette Kowalik

Wisconsin took certain precautions to protect voters, having a volunteer spray sanitize each voters' hands as they walked

through the door, as well as wiping down poll booths after each person votes. Voters were instructed to dispose of, or take home the pen they used for voting. Poll workers were provided with gloves, masks, and sneeze guards. Tape was placed every 6 feet to practice social distancing, although this proved difficult with lines at polling locations extending far beyond the pre-taped area. One volunteer running a polling location speaks about precautions she is taking to prevent her 77-year-old husband from getting sick, she plans to "Strip in the garage put my clothes in the washer and go downstairs for two weeks"

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden put out a statement claiming that in-person voting could be done safely saying the following:

"A convention having tens of thousands of people in one arena is very different than having people walk into a polling booth with accurate spacing with 6 to 10 feet apart, one at a time going in, and having the machines scrubbed down,"

-Joe Biden via virtual press briefing

While Joe Biden put out a statement saying voting could be done safely, democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders spoke out against the decision to hold in-person voting at this time saying the following:

"It's outrageous that the Republican legislative leaders and the conservative majority on the Supreme Court in Wisconsin are willing to risk the health and safety of many thousands of Wisconsin voters tomorrow for their own political gain,"

-Bernie Sanders via twitter

Senator Sanders has since suspended his campaign.

Holding an election in the middle of a pandemic puts millions

of citizens at risk for illness. Hundreds of polling locations were closed due to CoVID-19, making it even harder to practice social distancing. In Milwaukee, five polling locations were open, where under normal circumstances there would be 180 locations open. Videos and pictures show crowded polling locations with long wait times. Continuing to hold primaries in the middle of a global pandemic is a form of voter suppression where citizens of Wisconsin have had to choose between their safety and exercising their right to vote.

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Sources:

- *A day will live infamy what it looked when Wisconsin forced person voting during a Pandemic?*– Common Dreams
- *Joe Biden says voting in the Wisconsin Primary is safe locals say it could kill them*– Daily Beast