

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

February 5, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 1** in its entirety.

Assembly Bill (AB) 1 relates to state government actions to address the COVID-19 pandemic, extending the time limit for emergency rule procedures, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, and granting rule-making authority. Among other provisions, the bill limits the Department of Health Services and local health officers authority relating to gatherings. The bill also strips employers of their ability to keep their business and community safe by requiring vaccination as a condition of employment, with medical and religious exemptions.

It is incumbent upon all of us, but especially on elected officials, to lead by example and to do everything we can to keep Wisconsinites healthy and safe. I am vetoing AB 1 in its entirety because I object to the provisions in this bill that will make it more challenging to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. Instead, AB 1 takes away existing tools available to public health officials and employers.

Moreover, what is especially unfortunate is that these provisions were added back into this piece of legislation late and well after an earlier version of this legislation was passed by the Wisconsin State Senate with bipartisan support. That earlier version of AB 1 was a good faith effort at finding common ground, and I was proud to work across the aisle with Majority Leader LeMahieu and Senate Republicans on a compromise that would be supported by both Republicans and Democrats. While that version did not contain every provision that each side would have liked, it would have nevertheless moved Wisconsin forward in addressing many critical issues, including flexibilities for unemployment benefits. Shortly after that version of AB 1 passed the Wisconsin State Senate on a bipartisan vote, I committed to signing that version of AB 1 and urged the Legislature to send it to my desk without delay. If that version of AB 1 was before me, I would be signing it today. Unfortunately, AB 1 as I am vetoing it represents a missed opportunity for meaningful compromise and the continued partisan obstruction that has plagued our state's response to this pandemic from the beginning.

As I have said all along, our response to the pandemic should be about doing what's best for people, not politics. It should be about following the science and public health experts. It should be about working together to save as many lives as we can. I remain committed to doing everything I can to keep

Wisconsinites healthy and safe, following the science and advice of public health experts, and putting people first. I am hopeful members of the Legislature will choose to join me in these essential efforts, and should they decide to be partners in our state's response, I am ready and willing to welcome their participation and to work together to do what's best for the people of our state.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor