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Washington County Files Amicus Brief with State Supreme Court on “Safer at Home” Order

County argues local control is required by state law

West Bend, WI – Yesterday, Washington County filed an amicus brief with the Wisconsin State Supreme Court in support of the Legislature’s request to enjoin the extended safer at home order. In the brief, the county argues for the ability to utilize local control to best fight the pandemic at the local level.

County Executive Josh Schoemann released the following statements:

Under state law, it is the duty of local health departments to manage public health emergencies. Washington County, through a successful joint public health department, is capable of controlling the pandemic. The state should be supporting locals not indefinitely usurping our local control.

The time is now for the state to allow county governments, who are better equipped to monitor our local issues, to do our jobs. In any emergency, the boots on the ground can adapt much quicker and effectively than Madison or Washington, DC. We need collaborative guidance from state officials and then local autonomy.

It is unfortunate that the response to COVID-19 has become political warfare. Our involvement with this litigation is to ensure each county has the ability to respond to the pandemic in a way that fits for our citizens.

In close cooperation with Washington Ozaukee Public Health Officer Kirsten Johnson and Sheriff Marty Schulteis, the Washington County has been a leader in our pandemic response. From robust contact tracing to releasing outbreak information on a dashboard to presenting a Blueprint to Reopen, Washington County leaders have shown our willingness to balance the public health crisis and the economic crisis, while respecting individual liberty.

COVID-19 presents different challenges for each of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work in the long term. Wisconsin’s public health and economic well-being depends on local leaders stepping up. Our brief balances local public health policy and the preservation of our constitutional rights.

Check www.co.washington.wi.us/coronavirus for up-to-date information on the pandemic.

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