



04-22-2020

Citizens of Fond du Lac County,

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the many questions and concerns we have received about Wisconsin's Safer at Home Order. I want to start by assuring the citizens of Fond du Lac County that even during this pandemic, our top enforcement priorities here at the Sheriff's Office continue to be immediate and emergent tragedies like domestic violence, child abuse, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and highway safety violations; many of which intensify during stressful times. Although we have investigated citizen reports about violations of the Safer at Home Order, it is important to know that our deputies have taken an education first approach. Most people we find in violation immediately take steps to ensure voluntary compliance, and enforcement action is not needed. We take an oath to uphold the law, however just like when enforcing any other law, we reserve the right to exercise great discretion in doing so.

We share many of the same questions you do about whether or not issues surrounding the emergency order are in conflict with the Constitution. Our Founding Fathers created a government with three distinct and equal branches, so no one branch has a higher level of power. As sheriff, I am responsible for enforcing the laws put in place by our legislature, not interpreting them. If I were to unilaterally declare the orders unconstitutional, I myself would be violating the Constitution by executing the responsibilities of two of the three equal branches. Our judicial branch (the courts) are responsible for interpreting laws, and I am hopeful the Supreme Court will rule on the lawsuit recently filed by our legislature and provide us all with the legal clarity regarding these orders.

It is important we keep an open mind and be respectful of everyone's personal situation. Every day I hear from people who are struggling from lost incomes and businesses hurting from lost revenues, and on the flipside, I also hear from patients and healthcare workers who have been personally affected by this virus and who see benefit in these orders firsthand. I am very mindful of the fact that we need to get our economy back up and running in a manner that protects people's Constitutional freedoms while protecting the health and welfare of our community, and am hopeful we can begin returning to the "new normal" soon. No one wants to create a "second wave" that sets us back even further. Overwhelmingly our residents have complied with the order and have taken extensive measures to protect themselves and their families. Businesses have told me they are ready and willing to open when the time comes, understanding there will still be restrictions in place to keep both their employees and customers safe.

Envision Greater Fond du Lac will be leading a new task force whose purpose is to develop a plan to reopen Fond du Lac in a safe and responsible manner. This committee will consist of representatives from local business and industry, agriculture, healthcare, restaurants, bars, religious organizations, law enforcement, local government, and others throughout our county. While in its infancy, this task force is positive news for Fond du Lac. Many agree a "one size fits all" approach to reopening Wisconsin may not be the best plan for each county, so it is reassuring to know steps are being taken to formulate a plan here locally within our community.

One thing is certain – there will be more change ahead of us as we work together to control the spread of the virus in our community and adapt to the "new normal." What won't change is our pledge to protect and serve the citizens of Fond du Lac County through whatever change there is to come. In the meantime, cover your coughs and sneezes, stay home if you are sick, wash your hands, and practice simple steps like physical distancing to keep yourself and others safe and healthy. The better we do at stopping the spread now, the sooner we can get Fond du Lac going again.

Sheriff Ryan Waldschmidt