

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: August 4, 2020

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report highlights public health measures taken by the Milwaukee Health and Fire Departments, Department of Administration, Election Commission, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services

MILWAUKEE - On Thursday, July 30th the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) publication highlights public health measures taken by the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) and Fire Departments, Department of Administration, Election Commission, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to protect voters in Milwaukee during the April 7 election.

Wisconsin was the first state to hold an election with in-person voting after stay-at-home orders were issued to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Routinely collected epidemiologic data on cases, hospitalizations, and deaths were used to characterize virus transmission during the weeks immediately before and after the election. These data provide a preliminary assessment of potential effect of public health efforts to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 during an election. **No clear increase in cases, hospitalizations, or deaths was observed following the election, suggesting possible benefit of the mitigation strategies, which limited in-person voting and aimed to ensure safety of the polling sites open on Election Day.** These findings provide preliminary evidence that CDC’s interim guidance for ensuring a wide variety of voting options, encouraging personal prevention practices, and environmental cleaning and disinfection lower COVID-19 transmission risk during elections.

“I need to acknowledge everyone that spent countless hours planning and working on Election Day: the Milwaukee Health and Fire Departments, Department of Administration, and the Election Commission. The ability to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure, considering the circumstances, was solely the result of our talented and committed staff. From handing out masks, to ensuring adequate

distancing, cleaning, and sanitizing to providing empathy and support to voters that braced the long lines and wait times to express their right to vote. I also believe that it is important to recognize that regardless of a statistically significant spike in COVID-19 cases associated with election activities, that there were negative impacts as a result of holding an in-person election during the pandemic. For instance, we do not know how many people could not vote in-person because they were avoiding the risk of exposure to COVID-19. We also know there were issues with access to voting due to consolidation of polling sites because we did not have enough poll workers. For these reasons alone, the Milwaukee Health Department is committed to fair and safe elections and will promote early voting and mail- in balloting options in addition to in- person elections that employ strict safety measures.” - Dr. Jeanette Kowalik, City of Milwaukee, Commissioner of Health.

See the full CDC MMWR highlights report [here](#).

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