



*Representing UW-Madison Faculty.
Strengthening Wisconsin.*

PROFS statement on Nass proposal to block UW universities from protecting students, faculty, and staff

On Thursday, State Senator Nass (R-Whitewater) announced that he would move to block the University of Wisconsin System and its universities from enacting measures to help curb the spread of COVID-19 through testing, masking, or vaccination protocols. As Co-Chair of the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules (JCRAR), Senator Nass intends to have JCRAR determine that actions taken by UW institutions amount to regent policies and implementation of statutes and should therefore be implemented via emergency rules.

Senator Nass intends to take this action without public hearing, and by paper ballot, thereby avoiding any public meeting at all. Rep. Adam Neylon (R-Pewaukee), the Assembly JCRAR Co-Chair, said he supports the move.

The proposed action by Senator Nass and the committee is another instance of legislative overreach and micromanagement of the University of Wisconsin System. If the action is approved and determined to be legal, it will severely curtail the university's ability to maintain the safety of its students, faculty, and staff at a time when the swift spread of the delta-variant of the coronavirus threatens to sicken or kill those who are not vaccinated or who do not take proper precautions such as testing and masking.

As UW System Interim President Tommy Thompson has said, the biggest threat to our ability to safely reopen the campus this fall "would be actions that strip the UW System of the tools it has so successfully utilized to date to address outbreaks and reduce the spread of COVID-19." Senator Nass's action would do just that.

The proposal by Senator Nass is a shortsighted and cynically political attempt to undermine the authority of the University of Wisconsin to take measures to protect members of its community, measures that are based on science and on recommendations by health professionals and the Centers for Disease Control.

We urge JCRAR to reject Senator Nass's proposal. We also urge President Thompson to have his legal team thoroughly review the action being proposed by Senator Nass, and challenge that action if it is found to be lacking in statutory authority.

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