



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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News release

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kreuser's State of the County credits community for resilience, calls for concerted action on racism**

KENOSHA — Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser delivered his State of the County address to the County Board Tuesday night, lauding the community for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic while calling for action to battle systemic racism in our society.

“The state of Kenosha County is amazing,” Kreuser said, referencing the frontline workers, volunteers and others who have stepped forward to help the community during the ongoing public health crisis.

“Kenosha County is the biggest small town in the Midwest,” Kreuser said. “We care about each other and take care of each other. Thank to you all of those who have helped others during this pandemic.”

Kenosha County residents have done an outstanding job of flattening the curve, and the Kenosha County Division of Health and its director, Dr. Jen Freiheit, have done great work while serving as the epicenter of this community health emergency, Kreuser said.

“I commend the hard work of the Health Department employees, who are putting in long hours, working nights and weekends, to help the public and stay on top of COVID-19 in our county,” Kreuser said.

Kreuser followed up on an announcement he made last week, calling on the County Board to adopt a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis.

Doing this, he said, will commit Kenosha County to take actions toward addressing and remediating the health impacts of systemic racism. This call from the county executive comes amid a national movement inspired by the tragic murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

“Although society has made progress, we, as a community, still have a lot more work to do,” Kreuser said. “Together, we need to work on better benchmarks, outcomes, and with an ongoing national review.”

Kreuser noted that Kenosha County and he personally have signed on to an initiative by the Wisconsin Population Health Institute, recognizing racism as a public health crisis. He urged members of the county board and the public to also do so, at <https://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/match/match-wisconsin-healthiest-state-initiative/racism-is-a-public-health-crisis-in-wisconsin/>.

“It is well past time that we not only listen, but that we actually hear, empathize, ask questions, understand and take action,” Kreuser said.

### **Other State of the County Highlights:**

- **Economic development:** Kreuser said Kenosha County will come back economically, in spite of the recent setback caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

“We have tremendous infrastructure in place and we’re continuing to build it out further to attract and retain businesses and to keep our protective services and citizens safe on the roads,” Kreuser said. “We have and will continue to make available developable land ready to keep our economy moving forward and to create lots of rooftops for people to work under, and give our young people an opportunity to work right here in Kenosha County.”

- **County finances:** Kreuser noted Standard & Poors’ reaffirmation of the county’s AA+ bond rating and stable outlook. This came as the county recently refinanced some bonds at near-historic low interest rates, resulting in a savings of roughly \$522,000.

S&P noted its view of the county’s strong economy, strong management with good financial policies, very strong budget flexibility and very strong liquidity. Another credit rating agency, Fitch Ratings, also maintained its AA+ rating of Kenosha County and rated its operating performance at AAA.

- **COVID-19 costs:** Kreuser thanked Gov. Tony Evers for a recent \$2.7 million award to help Kenosha County absorb virus-related costs, from protective equipment to overtime and cleaning supplies.
- **Infrastructure:** Kreuser noted the county’s ongoing investment in infrastructure, including this year’s major project, the widening of Highway S between Green Bay Road and Interstate 94.
- **Parks and trails:** With parks and trails seeing heavy usage during the COVID-19 crisis, Kreuser said it has never been more important to have quality outdoor space for people to get fresh air and exercise. “And we have drawn down millions of dollars from outside sources to widen roads, pave or create multiuse paths, which are embraced by most segments of our community,” Kreuser said.

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