Exhibit 20
Voting in Wisconsin During a Pandemic: Lines, Masks and Plenty of Fear

Wisconsin’s primary showed an electoral system stretched to the breaking point by the coronavirus crisis, as people weighed the health risks against their desire to vote.

By Astead W. Herndon and Alexander Burns

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MILWAUKEE — Even before voting began, there were lines outside polling locations that stretched for several blocks. Some poll workers wore hazmat suits. Nearly every voter wore a face mask, removing it only to make small talk that reflected a combination of determination and grim humor about the extraordinary experience of voting amid a deadly pandemic.

For thousands of people across Wisconsin on Tuesday, fears of the coronavirus outbreak did not stop them from participating in the state’s elections, where critical races such as the Democratic presidential primary and a key state Supreme Court seat were being decided.

“It feels bad to have to choose between your personal safety and your right to vote,” said Dan Bullock, 40, as he waited to vote at Washington High School on Milwaukee’s North Side. “But you have to be heard.”

Many others across the state, however, appeared inclined to stay home as the fear of contracting the disease outweighed their desire to participate in the
most fundamental ritual of democracy. Late Monday, Republicans in the state legislature had gone to court to block the Democratic governor’s order to postpone the primary.

“No one should have to choose between risking their health and possibly dying and going to vote,” said Marcelia Nicholson, 31, a county supervisor for Milwaukee. She said she was unsure she could vote safely after having been exposed to the coronavirus herself.

In Milwaukee — where the number of polling stations was reduced from 180 to only five — voters tried to exercise proper social distancing as they waited, in some cases, for more than two hours. But in other areas of the state, including Madison, suburbs like Brookfield, and more rural areas like Beloit, the voting process was altered but not totally disrupted, with options that included curbside ballot access and poll locations that were more fully staffed.

Milwaukee has the biggest minority population in the state, which means that geographic and partisan differences in access to voting often overlap with racial ones.

The scenes that unfolded in Wisconsin showed an electoral system stretched to the breaking point by the same public health catastrophe that has killed thousands and brought the country’s economic and social patterns to a virtual standstill in recent weeks. And in Wisconsin, the political institutions proved overmatched, with a Republican legislature and a conservative state and federal judiciary resisting efforts to reschedule the election or revise the procedures for voting.

The result was a dangerous spectacle that forced voters to choose between participating in an important election and protecting their health. While election administrators said they were trying in myriad ways to make the voting process safer, the long lines, last-minute judicial rulings and backlogged absentee ballot requests added up to something resembling system failure.
Ellie Bradish, for instance, said she was forced to vote in person in Milwaukee after attempts at early voting and absentee voting failed.

“My friend and colleagues at work were worried about me coming out,” Ms. Bradish, 40, said. “But I was worried that if I didn’t come, my vote would be thrown out.”

The array of procedural problems led some state party officials to predict that the results would be contested by whichever side loses.

“People are going to be wondering about the authenticity of the vote no matter what because of the politicalization,” said Patty Schachtner, a Democratic state senator from St. Croix County, who made her own mask to wear during a six-hour stint as a poll worker.

National voting rights experts said the turmoil and acrimony surrounding the election could be an unsettling example of what might happen across the country later this spring if states do not manage to implement new methods of voting during the coronavirus outbreak — or even in the November general election if the pandemic has not abated by then.

In Wisconsin, Gov. Tony Evers and his fellow Democrats pushed for a range of changes to the primary process, including rescheduling the election and switching to mail-in voting. But Democrats faced a wall of resistance from Republicans who saw political advantage in leaving existing procedures intact.
Almost forgotten amid a life-or-death debate about voting procedures was a Democratic presidential race that is still not formally finished: former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Senator Bernie Sanders were both competing for delegates in Wisconsin, though neither man campaigned actively in the state. Mr. Biden, with a nearly insurmountable delegate lead overall, was expected to carry the primary, but in a strange byproduct of the tangled judicial rulings there would be no results released until next week.

It was not only the Democratic presidential primary on the ballot on Tuesday in Wisconsin: there was intense competition over a seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, with one of the justices in the conservative majority battling for re-election. The winner will be in position to cast a deciding vote on a case before the court that seeks to purge more than 200,000 people from Wisconsin’s voter rolls.

The panel has been a bulwark of Republican dominance in the state over the last decade, along with a G.O.P. majority in the State Legislature that has entrenched itself through aggressive gerrymandering.

Like so much else in Wisconsin, the scene was markedly different outside the main urban areas. Republican county chairs boasted about their smooth process throughout the day, with short lines and ample room for a smattering of voters who often showed little signs of the current health crisis — no masks, no gloves. In Sheboygan County, about an hour north of Milwaukee up the Lake Michigan shore, Dennis Gasper, a Republican Party official, said he drove around local polling places and found no issues.

“All the clerks have figured out how to deal with the coronavirus thing, so nobody should be having a problem voting,” Mr. Gasper said.

Mr. Gasper chalked up complaints from Milwaukee and elsewhere to Democrats “making political points out of what would normally be a mundane election process.”

But in Milwaukee, where there are more than 1,000 confirmed cases of the
virus and at least 87 people have died of it, many voters cast their ballots wearing full protective gear, some overtaken with fear.

Some Republican efforts to downplay the danger of the election ended up highlighting the medical risks involved. For instance, Robin Vos, the Republican speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly, posted on Facebook that he was volunteering as a poll worker, writing that “an impressive amount of planning and organization” went into securing the election. In photos, Mr. Vos looked ready to enter a contaminated zone: He was wearing a face mask, a plastic body covering and gloves.

The partisan divide within Wisconsin over the safety and integrity of the election was mirrored on the national level, with the Democratic presidential candidates raising concerns about the safety of the vote and President Trump urging Republican voters to the polls as though little was out of the ordinary. On Twitter, Mr. Trump lauded the incumbent Wisconsin Supreme Court justice seeking re-election, Daniel Kelly, as a jurist who “loves your Military, Vets, Farmers.” And later in the day he weighed in on the vote by mail effort, saying without evidence, “The mail ballots are corrupt, in my opinion.”

“Mail ballots, they cheat,” the president said at his evening briefing on the virus. “Mail ballots are very dangerous for this country because of cheaters. They go collect them. They are fraudulent in many cases.”

Mr. Trump himself voted by mail in the 2018 midterms and in last month’s Florida primary.

Mr. Sanders, who like Mr. Biden has held no campaign events in nearly a month because of the virus, took a far more somber approach, rebuking Wisconsin Republicans for risking “the health and safety of many thousands of Wisconsin voters” to force an election under conditions of extreme adversity.

Mr. Biden, who last week said he would defer “to the scientists” and to state officials about in-person voting in Wisconsin, was more skeptical Tuesday night. “My gut is that we shouldn’t have had the election in the first place, the
in-person election,” he said on CNN. “It should have been all-mail ballots in, it should have been moved in the way that five other states have done it.”

It was not just Democratic candidates who called the election dangerous: As a series of court decisions were announced on Monday evening — every one of them a setback for Democrats — Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other prominent party leaders accused the judiciary of siding with the Republican Party over the interests of voters.

In perhaps the sternest comments of all, Ms. Pelosi rebuked the federal Supreme Court for rejecting an effort late Monday to extend absentee balloting in Wisconsin. The court, Ms. Pelosi said on television, was “undermining our democracy.”

Despite the collective sense of civic duty on display in Wisconsin, many voters expressed dismay at the difficult circumstances. Kinnethia Tolson-Johnson arrived at her polling place in Milwaukee before it opened, hoping to avoid crowds and stay safe. But she had to wait outside for more than an hour while fellow voters organized themselves to keep proper distance. “It was discouraging,” Ms. Tolson-Johnson said. “And it was just hard to keep your energy.”

Hannah Gleeson, a health care worker in Milwaukee who is 17 weeks pregnant, and who recently tested positive for coronavirus, said she was despondent about being unable to vote. “I’ve always said that every vote matters, every vote counts, and it’s your one chance to have your voice heard,” she said. “And it’s now something that I really feel has been taken away from me, and my husband as well.”

Ms. Gleeson said she filed a request to vote by absentee ballot but never received one.

“They’re delivering refrigerated trucks out to Milwaukee because they expect the death toll to be so high,” she said. “But they also expect us to go out and vote.”
Representative Mark Pocan, a Democrat who represents Madison, said the electoral troubles that have been on display in the state the last few weeks should serve as a catalyst for national changes.

“We should be the poster child for a national vote by mail program in November,” Mr. Pocan said. “We cannot risk having this confusion headed into the national election.”

Astead W. Herndon reported from Milwaukee, and Alexander Burns from New York. Reid J. Epstein contributed reporting from Washington, D.C., and Nick Corasaniti from New York.

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  Updated April 4, 2020

  - **Should I wear a mask?**

    The C.D.C. has [recommended](#) that all Americans wear cloth masks if they go out in public. This is a shift in federal guidance reflecting [new concerns that the coronavirus is being spread by infected people who have no symptoms](#). Until now, the C.D.C., like the W.H.O., has advised that ordinary people don’t...