



SENATOR JANET BEWLEY
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

For Immediate Release

May 31, 2017

Bewley Urges JFC to Listen to The Council On Forestry

Wisconsin's renewable treasure, our forests, have sustained not only an abundance of natural beauty and diversity but generations of men and women who have made their living maintaining and harvesting this resource. Wood and paper products hewn from Northern Wisconsin are economic drivers for the state. We must ensure that forestry remains strong and that our forests remain safe from the threat of wildfire, insects and disease.

Unfortunately, the budget proposal the Governor put forward knocks a vital supporting rung out from this industry. Forestry is so important to our state that the people of Wisconsin voted to amend our Constitution to allow the state to levy its own property tax to support it. This slight tax of less than 17 cents per one thousand dollars of value supports a \$43 billion industry and 175,000 jobs in our state. Our forest maintenance, forest fire-fighting, forest renewal and forest jobs rely on it. Cutting this vital lifeline for forestry is a one-time political gimmick that will have lasting repercussions for years to come.

The Wisconsin Council of Forestry, which advises the Governor, Legislature, and Department of Natural Resources on forestry issues, voted to oppose the Governor's proposal. I was honored when Governor Walker appointed me to serve on the Council. Although the Council could be described as conservative, they take their responsibility seriously and try and stay away from overtly political debates. That makes the vote even more remarkable. These are the experts that the Governor has chosen and we should listen to them.

I know my Democratic colleagues on the Joint Finance Committee understand how vital forestry is to Wisconsin, but I'm not sure if my Republican colleagues do. I urge them to listen to the Council on Forestry and (1) maintain the Forestry Mill Tax through this biennium; (2) audit the forestry account so we can be fully informed on how collected funds are allocated; and (3) in light of the audit, make recommendations on how forestry funds are best spent.

-30-



25th Senate District

State Capitol: P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882 ★ E-mail: sen.bewley@legis.wi.gov
Web: <http://bewley.senate.wi.gov> ★ (608) 266-3510 ★ Toll-free: (800) 469-6562