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Cowles Working to Include Accountability and Oversight Measures in COVID-19 Legislation

GREEN BAY– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement regarding future action by the Legislature to pass a bill on our state’s COVID-19 response that will hopefully include, at the request of Senator Cowles, a provision to increase oversight and accountability through the award-winning non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau:

“Since the passage of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), I’ve been reviewing it closely to ensure that the federal funding available to Wisconsin to bolster our response to the COVID-19 outbreak is spent fairly and efficiently. The Wisconsin Legislature will soon vote on a final package that will help the many Wisconsinites impacted by this pandemic.

“While working with our community leaders, fellow Legislators, state agencies, and federal partners to adopt changes that will fight this public health emergency, I’m pleased to highlight a specific provision that I believe will be included in this legislation. As Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, one of my highest legislative priorities is promoting the efficient and effective operations of our state government, to the best of our ability. This provision would direct the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau, beginning on July 1, 2020 and continuing into the following year, to review government programs impacted by COVID-19 and expenditures made by state agencies with funds authorized and spent by our state government. The findings from these reviews will be published quarterly and available publically, with the results presented for consideration by the bipartisan Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

“While Wisconsin will see billions of dollars in needed financial resources from the CARES Act to combat COVID-19 and assist individuals, businesses, and local governments, disbursing these vast resources in short order carries an immense amount of risk for mismanagement and potential waste. By involving our nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau, the taxpayers of Wisconsin can have better insight and accountability of funds being received and expended, and that these audit findings will be discussed in a public manner.

“It’s my belief that this analysis will help Wisconsin better prepare for future emergency responses by improving distribution systems and expanding recordkeeping procedures while ensuring we account for any mismanagement or misappropriations of funding. Keeping the public informed on how different programs are operated and can be improved upon in the future has always been a goal of mine, and the COVID-19 response is no exception.”

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