



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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Dear Governor: You're Invited. Please Join Us.

Following a bill signing, Governor Tony Evers told the media that “they’ll know where the money is going in the very near future.” He was talking about us, the legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance (JFC), and the massive amount of federal funding flowing into our state from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA).

I really hope so.

As the Senate Co-Chair of the legislature’s budget-writing committee, I need to understand where the Governor intends to dedicate the \$3.2 billion (BILLION!) that is coming into our state. He has nearly complete, independent control of these funds and has not reached out to the legislature to discuss his ideas. His pockets are full of cash, but we don’t know where he is thinking about spending it. It is good news that he is thinking about providing direction sooner than later.

To date, the Governor has issued a couple of press releases to talk about broad ideas for spending the federal dollars. He has mentioned \$50 million for an “Equitable Recovery program” which will provide grants to “community partners who are doing work to eliminate disparities and promote equity and inclusion.” He has announced \$50 million for \$10,000 grants for new and existing businesses to move into vacant commercial properties. He has announced \$420 billion for small business grants up to \$5,000.

While I appreciate the information he has offered via the media, the JFC still doesn’t know where the rest of the funding will go. We’re trying to craft the state budget in a vacuum.

Unfortunately, even though the Governor said he is open to discussing his ideas with us, he also said it is not “at the top of my priority list.” The state budget is at the top of my priority list, so I hope he changes his mind.

I want to meet. I want to know. **I want to craft a budget that accounts for the massive amount of federal funding flowing into our state so that we can dedicate precious state resources to your priorities that will not be covered by federal funding.**

So, Governor Evers: You’re Invited. Please join us. Please meet with us.

We tried to take the legislative route and sent the Governor 11 bills that highlight the legislature's priorities for the federal funding and he vetoed all of them. As you may remember, these bills provide specific plans based on real priorities like local roads, broadband, water infrastructure, emergency response operations, long term care facilities and rural economic development and recovery. However, the Governor vetoed all 11 bills.

In every veto message, on every bill, he said that he was vetoing the legislation because it limits his flexibility and moves too slow. He said that his main goal is to send the funding "out the door" as fast as possible.

I'm all for a swift answer to where these funds are going.

The Governor also claimed that the federal government has not issued guidance on how the funds can be used. While this is partially true, I would suggest that the Governor tell us his priorities and work with the Federal government to ensure that the funds may be used to reach his goals. This is a pretty typical collaboration between states and the feds, especially when the Executives share political goals.

The bottom-line is that I am encouraged by the Governor's statement that he will provide more information to the JFC before we begin to vote on the funding priorities for our state. I welcome a conversation so that I may make thoughtful decisions with better information. I hope that the Governor takes us up on our invitation.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have any questions or need assistance with any state-related matters.