



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

June 11, 2021

Budget Bulletin: Transportation, Building Commission, Stewardship Program, Water Quality, Corrections, Courts...and more.

The Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) held two Executive Sessions on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 and Thursday, June 10, 2021. It was a very busy week and included significant strategic investments in a number of very important agencies and programs.

One of the most significant investments we made is for local roads. We invested \$100 million for local, rural roads and increased General Transportation Aids (GTA) in both years of the biennia. Everywhere I go, you tell me that you want us to fix the roads. This investment will go a long way toward this goal. The Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) said that this is the best budget for town roads in the history of our state. I am proud to have led and supported this effort.

We also invested in building projects all over the state. We dedicated \$629 million for the UW system including two buildings at UW Madison, and buildings at UW Green Bay, UW Stevens Point, UW Oshkosh and UW River Falls. We included many maintenance projects in our Building Commission plan. We need to take care of what we already own. We're also funding at least seven (7) projects to update facilities at state parks.

Speaking of state parks, I led an effort to reinvest \$1.5 million into the State Park Development Fund. This funding comes directly from camping fees and park stickers. We are reinvesting these funds into the parks so that they can do smaller projects such as improving gravel pads and trails, purchasing picnic tables and updating fire rings. We're taking the fruits of our restructured business model and reinvesting in our parks.

We also reauthorized the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for four (4) more years. We invested \$32 million for the various parts of this fund. This popular program is part of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and is utilized to purchase property and make improvements to public lands throughout the state. We will continue to analyze its effectiveness and investments over the next several years.

In our work on the Court System and Department of Justice, we added Assistant District Attorney (ADA) positions in Lafayette County and Sauk County and seven (7) other counties that were vetoed by Governor Evers during the last budget. Caseloads in these counties have increased significantly and we need to invest in them. We also hold counties harmless for costs associated with the four new circuit courts we added during the last legislative session.

For law enforcement, we dedicated \$4 million to the Law Enforcement Training Grant program so that local law enforcement agencies will be reimbursed for the critical training they provide for their staff every year. We also set aside \$1 million for Community Oriented Police (COP) Housing grants. The COP house program is a unique and interesting effort that puts police officers into homes in troubled neighborhoods. It has been very successful. One of my fellow Senators is working on a bill to expand the program and we have set aside funding to help pay for it.

Finally, we took meaningful action on water quality. We increased funding for the Producer-Led Watershed Grant program to \$1 million. This hugely effective program is applied by farmers throughout the 17th Senate District and I know it is a worthwhile investment in clean water. We also funded Well Compensation Grants with \$2 million and fully funded a second County Conservation staff person for every county.

If you would like to read all of the motions that detail our work, please visit <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/jfcmotions/2021>

Next week, we will be finishing the JFC's role in the state budget process. We will be talking about the Department of Health Services, the Department of Children & Families, broadband, taxes and a number of other departments. You may always watch us on www.wiseeye.org.

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov or call 608-266-0703.