



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update by Senator Howard Marklein July 2, 2021

Our Bi-Partisan Budget Heads to the Governor

The Wisconsin legislature wrapped up our work on the State Budget on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. It passed both houses with bi-partisan support. In the Assembly, four Democrats and all of the Republican members voted for the budget. In the Senate, all Republican members and three Democrats, including the Senate Minority Leader, voted for the budget.

According to the non-partisan, Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB), this budget bill received the highest number of votes for a budget bill in a generation with 64 votes in the Assembly and 23 in the Senate. “The last time it received more votes was in 2001. The 2001 budget bill, [2001 Wisconsin Act 16](#), was passed in the assembly in a 73-22 vote and passed in the senate in a 25-8 vote. (Note: the legislature had split control in that session, with Democrats in the majority in the senate and Republicans in the majority in the assembly, and the final action was on a conference committee report),” said Rick Champagne, Chief of the LRB.

This bi-partisan support is a testament to strength of our budget bill. It funds our needs and priorities, respects taxpayers and returns \$3.4 billion in a meaningful tax cut for nearly every citizen. I am very proud to support this budget.

The budget bill now moves to Governor Tony Evers. The Governor may take three types of action; sign it, line-item veto it, or veto the bill in its entirety. I predict that the Governor will use his powerful line-item veto pen to make changes to our bill, but that ultimately he will sign the budget.

Governor Evers, and every Wisconsin Governor since 1930, has the most powerful veto pen in the nation. He is able to partially veto appropriation bills, or legislation that includes spending. The Governor can veto parts of the appropriation bill, veto individual words and digits, potentially change the date of enactment by deleting digits or words and write-down spending. All of these vetoes can be used to change policy.

The Governor cannot veto current law. He cannot veto individual letters to create new words, which is lovingly referred to as the Vanna White veto. He cannot combine sentences to create a new sentence, also lovingly referred to as a Frankenstein veto. He cannot write-down appropriation amounts, such as bonding.

Due to the strength of our Governor’s veto pen, the legislature took great pains to limit language, in general, in our budget bill. We combed our document to ensure that his veto pen could not be used to change our legislative intent. To illustrate this effort: the Governor’s original budget proposal was 1847 pages. Our budget bill is 400 pages.

As you may recall, during the last budget cycle, the Governor used his veto pen to drastically alter funding for local, rural roads. He re-directed road funding to schools and radically changed the way the remaining funds were distributed. This veto significantly changed our legislative intent for these funds. We wanted to send the same funds to every county and municipality for road maintenance and repair. The Governor's veto, instead, created a competitive grant program that left a lot of our counties and municipalities behind. The Governor's veto of the local road aids was ultimately ruled to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. But we're learning and we have applied these lesson to the way we wrote the budget bill this year.

Now, we need your help. If there are elements of our budget that are important to you, I strongly encourage you to reach out to the Governor to tell him that you support our plans and ask him not to veto the things that are important to you. For example, if you support \$400 million for nursing homes and the Direct Care workers who have been serving on the front lines – he needs to know that. If you support \$100 million for local, rural roads - please tell him. If you want \$86 million for special education, \$6.3 million for sparsity aids and \$13 million more for high cost transportation aids to support rural schools - he needs to hear from you. Visit the E-Updates tab on my website for all of the Budget Bulletins that outline our actions, to refresh your memory.

Don't wait! The Governor's team is already working on our budget bill. I would expect to know his plans within the next week or so. Contact the Governor at 608-266-1212 or visit <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/governor/voice-an-opinion> to fill out his online communication form to share your opinions.

This budget is very good for Wisconsin. As I have said, we made strategic investments in our priorities, acknowledged the flood of Federal funding coming into our state, planned for the future and respected taxpayers. I sincerely hope the Governor considers all of these things as he decides whether to sign it, partially veto it or veto it all together.

If the Governor vetoes this budget, he will be vetoing the priorities of the people of Wisconsin.

- Governor Evers will be vetoing relief for hospitals throughout the state.
- Governor Evers will be vetoing over \$400 million for nursing homes and the workers who have taken care of our most vulnerable citizens this past year.
- Governor Evers will be vetoing \$100 million in funding for local roads
- Governor Evers will be vetoing more than \$130 million for State Highways
- Governor Evers will be vetoing mental health beds, farmer mental health programs, veteran suicide prevention and mental health services for students who need our support in schools across the state.
- Governor Evers will be vetoing funding for critical infrastructure projects across the state including seven buildings on UW Campuses, maintenance projects and more.
- Governor Evers will be vetoing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program, funding for state park development and a number of important water quality initiatives.
- Governor Evers will be vetoing \$86 million in special education funding, \$6.3 million more for Sparsity Aid and \$13 million more for high cost transportation aids.
- ...and he'll be putting \$2.5 Billion in Federal Funding for schools at risk by not meeting the Maintenance of Effort requirements we worked so hard to meet.
- Worst of all, Governor Evers will be vetoing a \$3.4 billion tax cut for the citizens we represent.

I appreciate all of your input, ideas, encouragement and support throughout the state budget process. Again, I think this is a very good budget for Wisconsin and I am proud of our work together to write a strong, bi-partisan budget bill for you.

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me. Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov, 608-266-0703, PO Box 7882, Madison, WI 53708, www.legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein.

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