

# Kleefisch: Walker's budget reflects residents' desires

Posted on Monday, Jun 12, 2017

Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch has a message for fellow Republicans looking to raise the gas tax despite Gov. Scott Walker's veto threat: Trust us, the voters aren't interested.

Kleefisch quickly ticks off stats about the number of listening sessions Walker did ahead of putting together this budget as well as the miles she drives in Wisconsin during a typical year — enough to complete the nearly 25,000-mile trip around the Earth — to say emphatically the administration's budget reflects residents' desires.

"We have heard from the people of Wisconsin," Kleefisch tells [WisPolitics.com](http://WisPolitics.com). "The people of Wisconsin have said now is not the time to raise taxes. The governor has committed to it. He's tweeted about it. He's been very clear about it. In every interview he's given about the subject, he doesn't want to raise taxes."

Kleefisch spoke with [WisPolitics.com](http://WisPolitics.com) as the budget battle heats up and as conservatives mark the five-year anniversary of the recall elections. She said her most vivid memory of June 5, 2012, was the elation her daughters felt after the results rolled in and they realized their mother would be home more often.

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"We were road warriors for a very, very long time," Kleefisch said. "For much of that time, I was on chemo (for treatment of colon cancer). That's a hard time for two little girls who hear their classmates say things and hear adults say things, see adults do things that you wished two little girls didn't have to hear or see."

Kleefisch said she and the gov have remained committed to getting around the state. Her office says she has participated in 131 events inside the state between Jan. 1 and yesterday. That doesn't count any official travel outside of Wisconsin,

including Kleefisch's upcoming trade mission to Mexico that runs Sunday through Friday.

That's in addition to the 210 public events she did last year and 260 in 2015, when she also led a trade mission to Japan and Taiwan.

And during her state stops, Kleefisch said she would regularly poll attendees about funding transportation. The overwhelming response was they wanted to see infrastructure funded through efficiencies in the current budget.

She also touted the \$77 million boost Walker wants to put into local road aids in this budget, saying it's a reflection of the requests the gov heard during his various stops from local officials.

"That's where you hear about potholes, not on your state freeways," Kleefisch said.

Some GOP lawmakers have argued the boost in state aid to local governments sounds like a lot on the surface. But once broken up among hundreds of municipalities, it pays for paving only a few miles of road in some areas. Kleefisch said the evidence on the road suggests otherwise, declining to get into a back-and-forth with GOP lawmakers.

She also, like the gov, is playing a little coy about her plans for 2018.

Walker has left little doubt he plans to run for another term in 2018, but hasn't formally pulled the trigger; Kleefisch said she's ready to run again and plans to be on the ballot as far as she knows. But as far as making a formal announcement, she's not getting out ahead of Walker.

"I'm ready to run," she said. "We're a team."

She said the administration's to-do list for a third term would be focused on attaching people "to their American dream," noting she has been working to connect jobs with the long-term unemployed, those who have served in the armed forces and those who have been incarcerated.

She touted the investments Walker is proposing in the budget to help fill the skills gap and regularly touted the nearly 100,000 open jobs posted at <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/>.

“We need to get everyone who wants their American dream connected to it, and I think through good policy decision we’ve got a real great shot at that,” she said.

Some see 2018 as potentially a good year for Dems, considering historically the party in charge of the White House tends to face a headwind in midterm elections; plus, President Trump’s poor poll numbers.

Kleefisch insisted “the Wisconsin story” will sell well with state voters regardless of what’s happening nationally. Still, she also said what Congress does with health care likely will play a role.

Kleefisch also said she has a personal interest in what Congress approves “as a pre-existing condition person” considering she had surgery two weeks before the 2010 election to remove a tumor from her colon.

She expects the Senate to pass a plan that includes a significant role for states in delivering health care, adding she would support such a move because it would give the administration the opportunity to imagine best deliver services and “continue to make it the greatest in the country.”

“Whatever happens with health care, it will be in the back of people’s mind when they go to the ballot box in federal and state elections, because I think it’s going to be combination solution” that heavily involves the states, she said.

Listen to the full interview:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/rebecca-kleefisch-interview/s-0Sn6L>