

One Wisconsin Now: State budget committee Democrats make a stand for student loan borrowers

Posted on Tuesday, May 23, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact:

Mike Browne, Deputy Director

mike@OneWisconsinNow.org

[\(608\) 444-3483](tel:6084443483)

Amendment to Allow Student Loan Borrowers to Refinance, Just Like You Can With a Mortgage, Would Put State on Road to Reform

MADISON, Wis. — Democrats on the state budget writing Joint Committee on Finance are offering a common sense plan to help provide relief from the student loan debt crisis for Wisconsinites today. Under the provisions of the amendment to the state budget, offered by Senators Taylor and Erpenbach and Representatives Hintz and Shankland, a state authority would be created to help student loan borrowers to refinance at lower interest rates, just like you can with a mortgage.

“There are too many hard working Wisconsinites with too much student loan debt. It’s an unnecessary burden on borrowers and their families and it’s a drag on our entire economy,” said Ross. “The good news is that there’s a common sense solution, allowing borrowers to refinance their student loan just like you can with a mortgage.”

Today’s budget amendment would adopt the provisions of the *Higher Ed, Lower Debt Act* (2017 Assembly Bill 143 and Senate Bill 91). The bill, sponsored by every single Democrat in the Senate and Assembly, and the budget amendment would create a state authority to help borrowers to refinance their student loans at lower interests rates, extend an existing state tax deduction to include student loan payments and provide additional information and loan counseling to borrowers.

Ross noted that the student debt crisis has worsened in Wisconsin in recent years. Since 2011 Wisconsin has risen to fifth highest in the nation in the percentage of college graduates with student loan debt. According to the most recent statistics, seventy percent of University of Wisconsin students matriculate with an average debt load of nearly \$30,000.

“The only solution Gov. Walker has offered is: ‘Call a bank,’” said Ross. “That is as useless as it is insulting to the hardworking student loan borrowers and their families.”

The policies enacted by Gov. Walker and the Republican-controlled legislature have contributed mightily to the current state of affairs that finds nearly one million Wisconsin residents with over \$19 billion in federal student loan debt alone. They made record cuts to higher education funding, dramatically underfunded financial aid leaving tens of thousands of eligible students without help and increased tuition for University of Wisconsin students by double digits.

Walker, as a member to the Republican majority in the State Assembly during the 1990s and into the early 2000s, voted for state budgets that resulted in tuition increasing over 50 percent at University of Wisconsin schools and technical colleges.

“Republicans in Wisconsin have done more than their fair share to create this mess. But they can help be part of the solution of for once they do what’s best for Wisconsin, drop their partisan roadblock and work with Democrats to put our state on the path to student loan debt reform,” concluded Ross.

#

One Wisconsin Now is a statewide communications network specializing in effective earned media and online organizing to advance progressive leadership and values.