

# Rep. Jacque: Ecstatic over additional funding for prosecutors

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Contact: Rep. André Jacque  
(920) 819-8066

*Inclusion of legislator's request a big win for public safety and victims of crime*

**Madison, WI** – State Rep. André Jacque (R- De Pere) released the following statement in response to today's announcement that the State Assembly will be taking action this week, in the form of an amendment to SB 54, on his request to address the statewide prosecutor staffing shortfall:

"I am thrilled to see this long overdue investment in public safety moving forward.

Over the past several years, through both the biennial budget process and separate legislation like 2017 AB 502, I have been dedicated to raising awareness of the overwhelming understaffing of Wisconsin's District Attorney offices and provide them with the necessary resources to ensure justice is done. Wisconsin has fewer prosecutors now than in 2003, and the average prosecutor in Wisconsin has a caseload that far, far exceeds the statutory caseload cap in place for public defenders.

This severe lack of manpower, especially Northeast Wisconsin, has led to heavy pressure to plea bargain or not prosecute cases in many counties, and limits the ability for many areas of the state to dedicate the staff time and training to operate worthwhile diversion programs and specialty treatment courts to achieve better rehabilitation and get people into treatment quicker. It also limits the performance of the DAs' responsibilities to carry out functions to protect victims' rights, has created massive case backlogs that delay the swiftness of the justice system,

increase costs to county government and jeopardize public safety, and provides inadequate resources to prosecute emerging categories of crime of increasing complexity, such as human trafficking, internet crimes against children, identity theft and fraud schemes. I greatly appreciate the often herculean efforts of our area District Attorneys with inadequate existing resources.

I am appreciative of Representatives Nygren and Born and my colleagues for recognizing the devastating effects of the shortage of prosecutors statewide for those counties below 80% of recommended staffing levels. Up to this point, the refusal to address this problem has been a bi-partisan failure. Today, we have identified what will be a bi-partisan solution to move forward to a brighter future for public safety in Wisconsin, and I could not be more pleased to help make it happen.

Thanks should also go to many of my fellow legislators who have helped to push this issue forward, especially Senators Wanggaard, Testin and Feyen and Representatives Quinn, Horlacher, Murphy and Tusler.

This is a huge step in the right direction, but there are many more yet to go to achieve proper staffing and I look forward to continuing my efforts on this issue in the sessions to come.”

Rep. Jacque is a co-author of Senate Bill 54, which requires the Department of Corrections to recommend revoking a person’s extended supervision, parole or probation if the person is charged with a crime. Rep. Jacque is also a co-author of Assembly Amendment 1 to SB 54, which will provide 53.75 ongoing additional state-funded assistant district attorney positions in 40 counties. Brown, Manitowoc, and Outagamie Counties, portions of which comprise the 2<sup>nd</sup> State Assembly District, would be in line for 2 new prosecutors each under Assembly Amendment 1. They each provided the following comments:

Brown County DA David Lasee:

“I really appreciate the work of Rep. Jacque and other local legislators in taking action to address the serious threat to the integrity of the justice system that is posed by the present understaffing of DA offices. This legislation will assist us in our participation in treatment and diversion programs, improve the efficiency and capability of the court system, and help us in dedicating the time necessary to ensure that justice is served.”

Outagamie County DA Melinda Tempelis:

“I appreciate the commitment to public safety this proposal represents. Additional prosecutors will help ensure our commitment to justice, serve victims of crime and allow us to participate in important criminal justice reform.”

Manitowoc County DA Jacalyn LaBre:

“Prosecutors are very pleased with the legislation to add additional prosecutors statewide. Additional prosecutors are absolutely necessary for improving public safety. It will help ensure the public, victims, and children will be represented appropriately. It will also help increase efficiency in the criminal justice system. Thank you to all who have worked on the proposal.”

Portage County DA Louis Molepske (D-Stevens Point), President of Wisconsin District Attorneys Association:

The legislative audit bureau determined in 2016 district attorney offices statewide have been in constant triage mode trying to deal with crushing caseloads while being 139 ADA positions short. When DA offices don't have enough prosecutors to handle their caseloads victims are unfortunately hurt by cases taking longer to prosecute and prosecutor burn-out increases as more cases are referred to already understaffed DA offices. Rep. André Jacque and Rep. Mark Born are two legislators who understand the crisis district attorneys have in running their offices statewide without enough Assistant District Attorneys and their work in crafting this solution to add 53.75 FTE ADA positions moves the needle tremendously in the right direction towards fully staffing DA offices at a level that respects victims' right to a speedy disposition of their cases and respects each county's right to have enough prosecutors to keep their communities safe. I look forward to working with these and other legislators who understand that arresting a suspect is the first step in holding offenders accountable as justice requires each county of this State to have the number of prosecutors necessary to convict those accused of crimes