

Rep. Neubauer: AG Schimel Continues 72-County Tour to Discuss Public Safety in Ashland and Bayfield Counties

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel continued his 72-county statewide tour to meet with local law enforcement and elected officials this week with stops in Ashland and Bayfield counties on Wednesday, March 21.

“The state’s drug epidemic has been the most important topic of conversation at all of our previous roundtable meetings and discussions in Ashland and Bayfield Counties were no different,” said Attorney General Schimel. “The threat posed by the opioid and meth epidemics goes beyond the individual user, as it’s causing a crime wave with links to other issues, like robbery, burglary, human trafficking, domestic violence, and child abuse. It’s crucial that the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) is working closely with our partners on the municipal, county, and tribal level and tailoring our responses and resources appropriately to meet our shared public safety mission.”

“Bayfield County appreciates the excellent working relationship with we have with the DOJ,” said Bayfield County Sheriff Paul Susienka. “Bayfield and Ashland counties have been long-time recipients of Treatment Alternatives and Diversion grant funding administered through DOJ. These funds have been invaluable in assisting our efforts to cope with drug and alcohol related crime. And, Bayfield County is excited to work with DOJ and the Wisconsin Evidence Based Decision Making team to develop best practices for inmate re-entry into communities. DOJ continues to be a key partner and asset investigating and prosecuting serious crimes in our local communities. The competent and dedicated leadership of DOJ has helped us make

great progress.”

Attorney General Schimel and the DOJ leadership team is meeting with law enforcement and local officials in every county to discuss public safety concerns specific to each county. The challenges faced by law enforcement leaders and the criminal justice system differ from county to county, even in neighboring communities, making it critical for DOJ to be responsive to public safety needs at the local level. DOJ is local communities’ partner in safety, and these meetings aim to discover what additional resources and expertise DOJ can provide to make Wisconsin safer and stronger.

DOJ financially supports a number of programs to help public safety officials keep the counties safe.

This year, Ashland and Bayfield Counties will each receive nearly \$223,000 to enhance the counties’ alcohol and drug courts, which provide an alternative to incarceration for those struggling with addiction. Bayfield County has also received \$80,000 to develop a program designed to assist jail inmates to successfully reenter society. In addition to reducing recidivism, this program will ensure individuals have a plan for housing, health care, employment, job training, and other services, as needed, so they can successfully reintegrate and become part of the community upon release.

The Northwest Area Crime Unit, which includes Ashland and Bayfield counties, will receive more than \$41,000 from U.S. DOJ and Wisconsin DOJ this year to help investigate drug distribution crimes in the area. This drug task force has also received nearly \$122,000 since 2015 to fight heroin and methamphetamine, and funding will be available through 2018.

DOJ also financially supports Ashland and Bayfield counties’ crime victim services organizations, ensuring that crime victims are given guidance and counseling as they participate in the criminal justice system. Since 2015, through U.S. DOJ Victims of Crime Act grants, DOJ has distributed nearly \$836,000 to victim services providers in the Ashland and Bayfield counties area, such as the Northwoods Day Shelter.

To see what other counties the Attorney General has visited, and where he will go next, go to: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ag-roundtable-map>

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/ag-schimel-continues-72-county-tour-discuss-public-safety-ashland-and-bayfield>