

Wisconsin Budget Project: With the election over, it's time to focus on Wisconsin's children, families and communities

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With Tuesday's election in the past, there will be plenty of analysis about what the results mean for politicians and political parties. But we need to make sure we focus on what really matters: the well-being of Wisconsin children, families and communities, from rural towns in the northwest to central Milwaukee and everywhere in between.

Wisconsin voters sent mixed messages yesterday, but the outcomes of the statewide races, the exit polls and the referendum results make a few things clear. Wisconsinites strongly support public education and access to quality, affordable health care, and they are ready for a change in how the state promotes economic growth. "Voters saw that gains from Wisconsin's growth are not being widely shared and that too many Wisconsin residents are finding it difficult to make ends meet," said Jon Peacock, director of the Wisconsin Budget Project. "They insisted on a change. We need to move away from the 'us vs. them' approach that has driven a wedge between Wisconsin residents and maintained disparities, and move forward in a way that builds bridges, is inclusive, and opens opportunity for every Wisconsinite."

It's time to move Wisconsin forward with smart policy and strategic investments to build thriving communities. "Divided government is going to create challenges for

the new governor and legislature, but it also creates a great opportunity for lawmakers to collaborate on a common sense, people-focused agenda,” said Peacock. “There are ample opportunities for lawmakers in both parties to work together on the building blocks of shared and sustainable economic prosperity: a well-educated and healthy workforce, strong communities and infrastructure, and equitable access to opportunity.”

Wisconsin’s communities, schools, and families will fare better when every person in the state has the opportunity to fully participate in and benefit from our economic growth. The Wisconsin Budget Project’s Path to Shared Prosperity agenda outlines how we can make that happen, describing four areas of action that are critical to Wisconsin’s success:

- Investing in healthy families. We need to make sure that everyone can see a doctor when they need one, regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, or how much they have in their bank account.
- Raising up working families. State lawmakers have let protections for workers erode, instead favoring corporate handouts for jobs that may never materialize. To improve the economic security of Wisconsin families, we should increase the minimum wage and give all workers access to paid leave.

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- Strengthening Wisconsin’s infrastructure and communities. Our economy is only as strong as the communities within it. We need to aggressively pursue strategies to make sure that all our communities can thrive and attract new residents and businesses — from the rural towns in the northwest to central Milwaukee and everywhere in between.
- Close tax loopholes that favor big corporations and the well-connected. Cleaning up our tax code would restore millions to invest in crucial priorities our communities need.

“If we all work together, we can build a stronger, more equitable state where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead,” said Peacock. “That’s what voters have shown they want, and that’s what Wisconsin needs.”

Go to www.pathtosharedprosperity.org for more about the economic agenda that will put people first and ensure that economic gains are broadly distributed.