

# AARP Wisconsin: What a great week for family caregivers

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Contact: Jim Flaherty, Communications Director  
Office 608/ 286-6308 – Cell 608/ 698-0928

**MADISON** – “What an outstanding week this has been for Wisconsin’s unsung, unselfish and often underappreciated heroes – our 578,000-plus family caregivers,” said Sam Wilson, State Director for AARP Wisconsin.

On Monday, Feb. 18, AARP Wisconsin stood alongside Governor Evers as he recognized the incredible work that family caregivers provide all across Wisconsin and signed an Executive Order establishing the creation of a Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving.

One day later AARP joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers at a press conference to introduce the Credit For Caring Act, which is proposed legislation that would help many of Wisconsin caregivers offset some of the personal expenses they incur while providing care for loved ones.

“We commend Governor Evers and state legislators for valuing the work these caregivers perform every day,” Wilson said. “They clearly understand the importance of preparing for Wisconsin’s increasingly aging population by making sure all the right supports and safety nets are in place to help families with the difficult tasks involved with providing this care.”

Family caregivers put in long hours helping loved ones with tasks such as giving baths, dispensing medications, preparing meals, paying bills, and providing transportation to doctor’s appointments.

More than 40 million Americans take on these challenges every day so that family

members, relatives or friends can remain living independently as long as possible in their own homes and communities rather than being moved into costly long-term care institutions, Wilson explained.

The task force will be charged with analyzing strategies to attract and retain a strong direct workforce, finding strategies to support families providing caregiving supports and services, and improving the quality of caregiving in Wisconsin.

“Caregivers provide critically important services and are often the unsung heroes, supporting and caring for friends and loved ones so they can stay in their homes and their communities,” Governor Evers said in a press statement. “It’s important to me that we recognize, value, and celebrate the work of caregivers across our state, and that we make sure caregivers have the support they need while strengthening and improving access to direct care workforce in Wisconsin.”

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Separately, the Credit For Caring Act would create a \$1,000 nonrefundable individual income tax credit for certain expenses incurred by a family caregiver to assist a qualified family member.

Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Rep. Ken Skowronski (R-Franklin), along with Sen. Bob Wirth (D-Kenosha) and Rep. Debra Kolste (D-Janesville) introduced the legislation on Tuesday of this week, and urged fellow state lawmakers to join them as co-sponsors.

“Each year, Wisconsin’s 578,000-plus family caregivers provide about 538 million hours of care to their parents, spouses, partners, and other adult loved ones,” Wilson said. In addition, they spend an average of \$7,000 per year on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving. They provide this care while also keeping up with their own jobs, running their own households and trying to make ends meet.

“Caregivers do all of this while Wisconsinites are getting older, with thousands of Boomers retiring each day and fewer home health care workers available to take care of them. That’s why we at AARP believe that making small investments in caregivers right now will lead to big savings for Wisconsin and much better care for families down the road.”

Wilson said AARP is very excited for both the task force and to see the Credit For Caring Act move forward. He said family caregiving is a bipartisan issue that impacts nearly everyone at some point in their lives.

“It’s high time we step up our game and do more to assist these heroes throughout Wisconsin. We hope lawmakers will clearly understand that this task force and tax credit are important first steps to providing this critical support,” Wilson said.