

Howard Marklein: Priorities, plans and a request. Will you do your part?

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The new legislative session officially begins on Monday, January 7, 2019 with the inauguration of the new Governor and legislature. I am honored to begin a new four-year term working on your behalf.

I sat down with my team this week and discussed my goals and priorities for the new session so that we continue to serve you well.

My top priority is to provide outstanding constituent services. Whether you call, email, write, visit the office or talk with me in the district, my top priority is to serve you in a meaningful way. I have instructed my team to work hard to answer your questions, connect you with state agencies and solve problems. They also work very hard to collect your input, record your ideas and follow-up. The 17th Senate District is very engaged and we appreciate the opportunity to work for you.

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I am committed to leading legislation that makes a difference. We will be reviving some legislation that did not make it through the legislative process last cycle as well as introducing new bills that have been requested and initiated by residents of the 17th. My goal is always to support legislation that has a strong impact in the 17th. Thank you to everyone who has contributed ideas for legislation. Keep them coming!

As a member of the legislature's budget-writing Joint Finance Committee (JFC), I will continue to be a steward of the State Budget and keep an eye on the State Checkbook. Budget deliberations will begin in February or March. I will keep you

posted on the process and my work on your behalf.

In every way, I will champion rural issues. From rural roads to rural schools to EMS, broadband, agriculture and water issues, I will be focused on rural issues. My new role as Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions gives me a great opportunity to work on these issues directly. I am also the Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs as well as serving on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

I will defend our reforms. We have done a lot of good work over the last eight years since I started in the legislature. I will work hard to keep the good reforms that are working well for our communities.

I am also committed to working with all of my legislative colleagues and the new Governor to get things done for the people of the 17th Senate District. We have a tremendous opportunity this session to collaborate and restore civility to the legislative process. Democracy is built on deliberation, negotiation and discussion. We must be willing to listen to each other and seek to understand opposing viewpoints. But we cannot do this if hate is present.

Over the last several weeks, my team and I have received an amazing amount of hate. Callers, emails, letters and visits have been filled with profanity, name-calling and hateful comments and accusations. We have done our best to receive the input and ideas despite the hate, but it has been difficult.

At the same time that my team was managing an influx of hate, residents in Spring Green were erecting signs that read "Hate has no home here!" in response to an anonymous flier that shared links to nationalist websites. The City of Baraboo launched an anti-hate campaign in response to a photo on the internet. And we celebrated holidays of gratitude, peace and renewal. But the hate directed at me and my office continued. Even on Christmas Eve, I received hateful, mean emails!

I struggle with this conflict. Why is hate acceptable, when it is directed at me and my team? But it has no home in my own community?

I am all for free speech. I welcome differing viewpoints and seek input on a regular basis. However, the same people who ask for civility also send me vile, hateful comments. How do we move forward with so much hate? Following is an edited

sample of some of the emails, social media messages and phone calls my staff and I received:

“Howard Marklein – you suck!”

“You’re a d(*& fool!! You’re a real piece of crap!! I’d bet you support the vile orange pig also!”

“Howard better watch his back if he is out in a group of people.”

“Never liked that S(*#&head. Sure as h\$#& don’t now.”

“You are a human stain, Marklein. You and your crooked Republican cohorts should be tarred and feathered on Capitol Square.”

“You are such a joke!”

“Resign now and beg for our forgiveness before you rot in hell.”

“Real 2018 year in review...Howard Marklein f%\$*& over his constituents and then tells everyone it’s simply placing necessary checks and balances on the Governor...F&*%^ you, YOU F(*&*%^ LIAR

Please do your part to stop the hate.

We may disagree. We may have intense discussions. But that is because we each have our own set of beliefs based on our ideas, backgrounds and experiences. It is OK to disagree.

Hate is not OK.

Please do your part to insure that disagreement does not become hate. We must seek common ground and work to understand each other; only then will we restore civility.

-Marklein, R-Spring Green, represents Wisconsin’s 17th Senate District.