

One Wisconsin Now: No help for one million student loan borrowers, but a special favor for one electric car enthusiast

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Contact:

Mike Browne, Deputy Director
mike@OneWisconsinNow.org
(608) 444-3483

MADISON, Wis. — There are over one million Wisconsinites with student loan debt totalling over \$24 billion dollars. Republicans in control of the state legislature refused to include Gov. Tony Evers' 2019 budget provision to help by setting up a state plan for allowing borrowers to refinance their loans, just like you can with a mortgage. The same Republican legislators however did include a provision to help one electric car enthusiast, State Senator Chris Kapenga.

“Republicans in control of the state legislature rejected any help for hard-working student loan borrowers in Wisconsin but they had no problem voting to include a special budget favor to get the vote of their colleague Sen. Kapenga,” said One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Analiese Eicher.

The [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel first reported](#) on the inclusion of the “Kapenga Kickback”: “A last-minute budget provision to make it easier to sell cars made by Tesla is aimed at winning the crucial vote of Sen. Chris Kapenga, who has pushed for the measure in the past and owns a business that sells Tesla parts and salvaged electric vehicles ... Kapenga, a Republican from Delafield who works as an accountant, owns [Integrity Motorsports of Eagle](#), which sells Tesla parts and

rebuilt and sells salvaged Teslas, according to the company website.”

In his 2019 budget proposal, Gov. Tony Evers included measures to begin the process of helping Wisconsin student loan borrowers with a state-based plan to help refinance their loans, just like you can with a mortgage.

Republican leaders removed Evers’ 2019 proposal shortly after the budget bill was introduced and forbade the Joint Committee on Finance from considering a Democratic amendment to restore the help for student loan borrowers. Senate and Assembly Republicans also rejected Democratic amendments to restore the plan when the full legislature took up the budget bill.

A recent poll of Wisconsin voters found broad and strong support for the proposition that there should be a state-based plan to help student loan borrowers refinance their loans. Overall support was 76 percent. Support was 76 percent among women and 77 percent among men; 80 percent among respondents age 40-65 and 78 percent among voters over age 65; 76 percent among African American voters; 78 percent among self-identified Independents and even 64 percent among Republicans.

Eicher also noted that the Republican passed budget also cut investments in K-12 public schools, rejected millions in federal Medicaid funds to help expand access to affordable health care, gutted clean water protections and let out-of-state users of Wisconsin roads off the hook for helping to pay for them.

She concluded, “What’s so galling is not just how Republicans turned their backs on hard working student loan borrowers and cut the investments in the people of Wisconsin in Gov. Evers’ budget but that they had no problem including the ‘Kapenga Kickback’ to get their plan passed.”