

Rep. Billings: Building Commission Member Rep. Billings statement on capital budget vote

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MADISON, Wis - Today, the State Building Commission convened to vote on Governor Evers' 2019-2021 capital budget. Republican members of the commission voted against all of the Governor's recommendations. This act by the Republicans moves the capital budget forward to the Joint Finance Committee with zero affirmative recommendations from the commission. Rep. Jill Billings (D-La Crosse), chair of the Higher Education Subcommittee of the Building Commission, voted in favor of the proposed capital budget and released the following statement after the meeting:

"Governor Evers' capital budget makes vital, strategic investment in our state infrastructure, and wherever possible leverages public-private partnerships," said Rep. Billings. "After years of deferred maintenance or delaying essential projects, it's necessary to address the infrastructure needs of our state."

The Governor's capital budget recommendations prioritize: fixing aging state facilities, revamping university science buildings to meet the needs of training the next generation of innovators, a commitment to establishing a new standard for juvenile corrections, creating an economic-generator hub in rural Wisconsin, and promoting tourism (Wisconsin's third largest industry) with investment in the Alliant Energy Center and History Museum."

“These investments create local jobs and spur economic development throughout the state, continued Billings. “Estimates suggest that if enacted this capital budget alone would create over 40,000 jobs statewide and \$4.5 billion in economic activity.”

The vote today marks the first time that a capital budget moves forward without recommendations.

“I believe that these capital projects are a sound investment and would be an economic driver statewide, said Billings. “This is why I’m disappointed that the Republican members of the committee voted against this budget, and instead chose to abdicate all power of the Building Commission to the members of the Joint Finance Committee.”

The Governor’s capital budget included over eighty projects statewide. Four projects that were recommended are in Rep. Billings’ district on the UW-La Crosse Campus. These projects include Phase II of the Prairie Springs Science Center, renovations to Coate, Sandford and Graff Main Hall, and construction of a new fieldhouse. With today’s vote, none of these projects move forward to the Joint Finance Committee.

“I’m disappointed that UW-La Crosse’s projects did not move forward with a positive recommendation from the Building Commission,” stated Rep. Billings. “This is not the end of the road for these projects, as there is still time to include them in the final state budget. I will continue to be a strong advocate for these projects and will work with members of the Joint Finance Committee to include them in the final budget.”

The State Building Commission is tasked with developing and overseeing the long-range building program for the state. The State Building Commission is an eight-member body, chaired by the Governor. Other members of the commission include three members from each legislative chamber (two from the majority party and one from the minority party) and one public member appointed by the Governor.