

Rep. Hebl: Legislative schedule a disservice to Wisconsinites

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We are now at the beginning of August, almost eight months into the new legislative session. Despite having plenty of time to work on the issues of the day, the Wisconsin Legislature has passed very few bills. Of the 670 bills introduced in both the State Assembly and State Senate, just seventeen have been enacted into law. Not only have we debated and passed very few bills, it appears Speaker Robin Vos will not have the assembly in session until October, which means we will have gone almost four months in between session days.

Why is so little work being done this session? At this point in the 2017-18 session, thirty-six bills had become law. In 2015-16, fifty-six had been signed by the governor. The State Senate has not held a confirmation for a single one of Governor Evers' cabinet picks. Hard to believe, considering they confirmed 82 of then-Governor Walker's appointments in one day last December. So why has Speaker Vos brought the legislature to what seems like a near-halt?

There are many issues that we must address that cannot be solved if we have a 4 month break in work. We still have to come up with a solution for polluted groundwater in northeast and southwest Wisconsin. We should address the student loan debt crisis facing many Wisconsinites. Farmers in Wisconsin are facing tough weather and tariff-induced economic situations. We still haven't expanded Medicaid to give 80,000 more Wisconsinites affordable health care. Yet, Speaker Vos wants the Wisconsin Legislature to take a long vacation.

I understand that summer vacations are nice, but legislators are no longer school children. We were elected to do a job, and I think voters expect more out of us than

the four month hiatus that Speaker Vos has imposed on us. Not only that, but we are not scheduled to be in session after May 13, 2020. That means from then until the new legislature is sworn in in 2021, there will be a seven month gap of passing bills. Including the 2019 summer hiatus, that's eleven months of a two year session were we are not acting on bills. During last December's lame duck session, many Republicans loved to say "we are elected to serve for two full years" to justify their power grab. It seems the definition of hypocrisy for the majority party to then turn around and take off almost half of the entire two year session immediately after saying that.

There is so much work that needs to be done to help Wisconsin residents. Wisconsin legislators were elected to serve, not to take four-month long breaks. Speaker Vos ought to come back from his numerous vacations and call the legislature into session so we can get back to the business of solving the problems that Wisconsinites face.