

# Rep. Ohnstad: Budgeting For lost opportunities

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MADISON - Today the Wisconsin Assembly debated and passed a modified version of the 2019-21 Budget Bill. Governor Evers introduced the bill in February, but it was heavily amended by the legislature's Republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee. Representative Tod Ohnstad (D-Kenosha) and all Democrats voted against the final bill. The bill will now go to the State Senate for consideration tomorrow.

In response to these actions, Representative Ohnstad issued the following statement:

"I approached this budget process with true optimism for what could be accomplished on behalf of the people of this state. With the election of Governor Evers in November, voters sent a message about their priorities for Wisconsin. Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled legislature immediately rejected many of the key policies Governor Evers had offered throughout his campaign and based on several series of statewide listening sessions.

The budget authored by Evers proposed a meaningful and sustainably funded middle class tax cut. It reflected a true dedication toward education and investment in the future of our state. It began to once again fund our transportation and infrastructure needs with revenue derived from those who use these systems. It allowed for patients to alleviate chronic pain and other medical symptoms without the use of opioids through access to medical marijuana. It protected homeowners and small businesses from a property tax shift that benefits huge corporations. With an increase in the minimum wage, it gave the people of this state a much-needed raise.

All of these are missed opportunities.

Perhaps no policy was more foundational to the heart of this budget than finally accepting the influx of federal funds the state would receive by expanding healthcare coverage in our state. We will foolishly continue paying more for less under the Republican proposal. Expansion would have brought an additional \$63 million to Kenosha County for healthcare programs spanning from dental care to mental health to prenatal care to opioid treatment, and it would have covered 2,637 more people in our county. After their years of opposition, this ill-advised decision will have cost the state over a billion dollars through this year.

While I have been discouraged by the approach my Republican colleagues have taken on the budget and towards working in a bipartisan manner with our governor, I remain hopeful that throughout the course of the remaining session we can work together to address many of these issues in the spirit of compromise and cooperation that the people of Wisconsin expect from their leaders.”