

Sen. Cowles: GOP budget provides a substantial improvement for Northeast Wisconsin

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after voting in-favor of 2019 Assembly Bill 56, the 2019-2021 Biennial State Budget:

“Today, I voted in-favor of a budget that is significantly better than the budget introduced by Governor Evers earlier this year and is now a good budget for Northeast Wisconsin. By prioritizing our state’s fiscal health and protecting taxpayers while still making substantial and necessary investments in vital state services like transportation infrastructure, K-12 education, improvements in our justice and corrections systems, and addressing Wisconsin’s healthcare needs.

“Despite some initial concerns I had with the levels of spending in this budget, Republicans provided a balanced budget with a structural deficit \$500 million less than Evers’ proposed and one of the lowest amounts of nonfiscal policy in decades, all while putting money back in the pockets of middle class families.

“In Northeast Wisconsin, we’ll see a number of infrastructure projects important for continuing our region’s growth and prosperity moving ahead. This includes the first steps of the I-41 expansion with plans to connect a south bridge in De Pere, the State Highway Program funding necessary to progress the Hwy-15 expansion, fixing a glitch in the Local Bridge Assistance Program to help Kaukauna replace the Veterans Memorial Lift Bridge, the land purchase and planning for a new correctional facility in Northeast Wisconsin to close GBCI, a new Stockbridge-Munsee Youth Wellness Center, and more.

“All Wisconsinites will benefit our state’s commitment to other priorities, including transportation. Focusing on fixing the roads closest to home, a 10% increase in local transportation aids and a \$95 million one-time investment will help to fix more main streets and neighborhood streets.

“Local students and youth throughout the state will see results from a \$500 million increase to K-12 education funding, which increases an additional \$604 per student over the next two years. This investment will boost special education aid, rural sparsity aid, and mental health assistance for Wisconsin students.

“Focusing on improving our criminal justice system, this budget provides an additional 6.5 desperately-needed Assistant District Attorneys to the four counties in my district to help clear-up any case backlogs and provide more justice to Northeast Wisconsinites. Furthermore, a pay raise for ADAs and Public Defenders, a rate increase for private bar attorneys taking PD cases, and an increase in funding to the very-successful Treatment and Diversion program will help to provide justice and rehabilitation for those in the criminal justice system. Finally, a well-deserved pay raise to our dedicated correctional officers will help to reward our dedicated employees and attract new correctional officers to reduce overtime expenses.

“The Legislature was also able to make real investments in Wisconsin’s vulnerable populations without expanding government assistance programs. By focusing on increasing the Medical Assistance reimbursement rates, rewarding our long-term care employees, increasing youth mental health services, and keeping nursing homes and elderly care accessible and affordable, Wisconsin will continue to shine as a top state for health care.

“The Republican Legislature was able to prioritize all of these services while still providing a balanced budget and putting \$516.2 million back in the pockets of taxpayers. This means that an individual making \$50,000 would see a \$265 decrease in their state taxes. In short, I was proud to vote for the accountable and responsible budget, and look forward to seeing the dividends this budget will pay over the next two years.”

The budget now heads to Governor Evers for his signature.