

# Sens. Erpenbach, Johnson and Reps. Taylor, Goyke: On last day of budget deliberations, JFC Democrats lament missed opportunities

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*GOP Continues to ignore the will of Wisconsin voters*

(MADISON)- Today marks the last day of Joint Finance Committee (JFC) budget deliberations. Instead of sitting down and working with Governor Tony Evers and legislative Democrats, Republicans prioritized politics over people.

The long list of missed opportunities began on day one with the rejection of billions of federal dollars to invest in the health of all Wisconsinites. Instead of expanding Medicaid, Republicans introduced their own double-tax proposal, which spends \$324 million more state tax dollars, and rejects returning home \$1.2 billion in federal tax dollars. As a result, Wisconsinites' hard-earned federal tax dollars will now be sent to California and Illinois and all of the other states that put smart fiscal policy before partisan politics.

“For our communities, this is not a partisan issue,” said Senator Erpenbach (D-West Point). “With the Medicaid Expansion, Wisconsin would be able to provide more affordable, quality coverage to 82,000 Wisconsinites, while lowering the cost of

insurance premiums for everyone in the state. Republicans have rejected dollars that could have been reinvested to work towards eliminating health disparities and improving the health and well-being of Wisconsinites at every stage of life, in order to send a political message.”

After listening to the people of our state, Governor Evers proposal made historic investments in our K-12 public schools. JFC Republicans cut nearly \$1 billion from Governor Evers’ school budget. Most grievously, after 10 years without an increase, Republican politicians slashed the special education funding proposal by 83%. Schools throughout Wisconsin are having to transfer approximately \$1 billion from their general school aids each year to meet their students’ special education needs because of a decade of flat funding.

“As legislators, we didn’t get elected to choose which children get to thrive and which do not,” said Senator Johnson (D-Milwaukee). “Republicans cutting 84% of Governor Evers’ special education budget needlessly picks winners and losers and goes against what the people of Wisconsin asked of us.”

Instead of proposing a long-term solution to fix our crumbling roads, Republican politicians once again adopt a temporary, short term fix. In contrast, Governor Evers’ proposed a long-term, sustainable plan to fund our public transportation system well into the future, and require heavy trucks and out-of-state visitors to share the costs. By forcing Wisconsin drivers to foot the entire bill with record fee hikes, Republicans let out-of-state drivers off the hook.

“Our roads, whether they be urban or rural, are in need of repair. The State knows this and has studied it multiple times,” said Representative Goyke (D-Milwaukee). After years of neglect by Republicans, Governor Evers proposed a responsible transportation budget for everyone. Legislative Republicans rejected his plan and are forcing Wisconsin taxpayers to foot the entire bill to repair our roads with out-of-state drivers not paying their fair share. Under their plan Wisconsin pays and Illinois gets their own free ‘WI-Pass.’”

Republicans added to their embarrassing environmental track record by stripping out key clean water proposals by Governor Evers. When infants are getting sick from excessive nitrates in our water, families have liquid manure coming out of their faucets, and nearly one-half of approximately 1.7 million private wells do not meet acceptable health standards, it is time to act. Instead, Republicans cut \$43 million dollars from Governor Evers’ year of clean drinking water programs and

failed to expand eligibility for the well compensation program, which helps families remediate contaminated wells.

“Clean water should not be a partisan issue, yet once again Republicans took the ‘People’s Budget’ and turned it into the ‘Politicians Budget,’” said Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison). “Instead of putting the health and lives of our communities first, Republicans failed to make the needed investments in providing and protecting clean drinking water to every Wisconsin home. It’s about priorities, and families should be able to drink water from their tap without fear of PFAS, nitrates, lead, or arsenic, no matter their zip code.”

The GOP budget will now go to the full legislature where its future is uncertain given opposition within their own party.