

Rep. Tusler: Unveils community safety legislation

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Criminal Justice Coalition Develops Comprehensive Budget Proposal

Madison, WI – Today, Representative Ron Tusler (R-Harrison) and Senator André Jacque (R - DePere) unveiled a budget proposal developed by the Criminal Justice Coalition, a group with representatives from the Association of State Prosecutors, Wisconsin District Attorneys Association, Office of the State Public Defender, State Courts, and Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ). The legislation unveiled today represents the united budget request of these entities and incorporates changes by new Attorney General Kaul.

“I am proud to advance this proposal today that represents the stakeholder-developed budget request for the criminal justice system,” Rep. Tusler said. “This budget request is detailed, cost savvy, and actionable today.”

This combined request includes:

- Funding for 60.85 additional Assistant District Attorney (ADA) positions
- The creation of a State Prosecutors Office & Council
- Full funding for merit-based pay programs for ADAs, Public Defenders, and State Crime Lab Analysts
- Raising the hourly reimbursement rate for private bar public defender attorneys from \$40 per hour, the lowest in the nation, to \$70 per hour
- The creation of a rural public defender program to increase access to defense counsel
- Full funding for the Supreme Court-mandated \$100 per hour reimbursement

rate for court-appointed defense counsel

- Funding for new DOJ staff in needed areas: Forensic Technicians, ballistics analysts, a Crime Scene Response Unit, Internet Crimes Against Children staff, a Digital Forensics Unit, two Assistant Attorney Generals, a Forensics Accountant, and a Special Agent

Many of these items were introduced as independent legislation by Rep. Tusler last session. The Criminal Justice Coalition has been collaborating on the joint proposal since last spring and is geared towards funding core essential services.

The overall cost of the budget proposal is \$63.2 million, which is \$2 million less than the original proposal and even less than the combined total of each stakeholder's individual budget request submitted to the Governor last September.

"This package makes sense for the stakeholders in the criminal justice system and is smart for taxpayers, saving millions of dollars," Rep. Tusler said.

Senator Jacque stated, "This bill will result in a more efficient and effective process with fewer court appearance delays and more time from prosecutors and public defenders dedicated to ensuring that justice is served. This also provides quicker opportunities for healing victims as well as health assessments or treatment for those convicted of crime."

The bill is currently circulating for co-sponsorship and will be formally introduced in the coming weeks. The Governor will announce his budget next Thursday, after which the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance will hold hearings and vote on specific funding details.

The Assembly GOP proposal announced on Monday does not include funding for any DOJ requests and expresses general support for Treatment Alternatives and Diversion programs, worker training for inmates finishing their sentences, and investing in correctional officers. The drafted legislation proposed by Rep. Tusler and Sen. Jacque reflects the entire Criminal Justice Coalition's budget request.

"This legislation and the proposals announced Monday have many shared elements, all of which I either introduced last session or supported." Rep. Tusler continued, "My focus for the upcoming budget is making sure that our criminal justice system receives the resources it needs to make and keep our communities safe, but most importantly, highlight these issues so they do not get lost in the fray."