

# Howard Marklein: Committee assignments play to my strengths

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I recently received my new committee assignments for the upcoming legislative session and they all play to my strengths. As I have already announced, I have been appointed to serve as co-chair of the legislature's budget-writing Joint Committee on Finance (JFC). As a part of this appointment, I will also be serving on the Joint Audit Committee and the Joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER). In addition to these assignments, I am also the new Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism.

I am excited to continue serving on the Ag committee in the State Senate. With one of the most ag-dependent districts in Wisconsin, this is an important role for me where I will continue to be a voice for farms of all sizes and varieties. From beef cattle in Iowa County to cranberry marshes in Juneau County, dairy farms in Sauk County and hog facilities in Grant County, corn, soybeans and all kinds of produce, my district has it all.

I am looking forward to re-introducing several ag-related bills including Truth In Food Labeling and a bill related to on-the-farm teaching hours for UW-Extension staff. I will continue to monitor and advocate for the Dairy Innovation Hub at UW Platteville, UW River Falls and UW Madison. We also must take a look at meat processing and food supply chain issues that were exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will have a lot of ag-work to do!

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In addition, I will now be working on Tourism-related issues as a part of my

committee work. Tourism is a very important part of our local, small-town communities. From the Mississippi riverfront in Grant County to the edges of the Wisconsin Dells destination, we have everything from major waterparks to small hometown museums. I look forward to working on this issue.

I am also eager to serve on the Joint Audit Committee again. I am looking forward to requesting a thorough and specific audit of several government programs. As a CPA and forensic accountant, I understand the value of a strong, professional audit and know that we will be able to improve our state laws and programs by carefully assessing our operations and processes.

Finally, I am extremely honored, humbled and excited to be appointed to serve as co-chair of the Joint Committee on Finance. Having served as a member of this committee for three sessions, I recognize the extraordinary opportunity before me and appreciate Majority Leader LeMahieu's trust in me to lead this committee on behalf of the State Senate.

I also appreciate the trust and confidence of my fellow Senators and Representatives with whom we will be crafting the next state budget and stewarding taxpayer funds. I do not take this responsibility lightly.

I am grateful for the experience I gained over the last three budgets. I am also very glad that we made several good financial decisions and built a Rainy Day Fund worth \$761.8 million. Wisconsin was in a positive financial position at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and we will continue to work hard to recover quickly.

My new committee assignments are effective on January 4, 2021 when the legislature convenes for inauguration to begin the 2021-22 Legislative Session. However, I am already actively working to prepare to hit the ground running when the official legislative session resumes.

— *Marklein, R-Spring Green, represents the 17th Senate District.*