

Howard Marklein: My plans for 2020

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This is the time of year when we each take a hard look at our recent history and set goals for the year ahead. I have several goals for our work together including advancing legislation, studying issues that are important to our communities and making plans for the next legislative session and budget cycle that begins in January 2021. As always, I will continue to provide support and assistance as I am able to for individuals and communities that need help, as well as seeking your input and gathering ideas for the future.

We have four months of legislative floor session remaining on our legislative calendar. I expect that the Senate will be on the floor January through March, with wrap-up work in April. I have many bills I continue to work through the legislative process including three bills to support local, rural Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as a result of the four EMS Summits I held this fall. Nearly 70 EMS volunteers, representing 30 different departments, attended these summits to provide input on ways to help them to continue to provide life-saving services in our communities. I am optimistic that these three bills will move swiftly through the legislative process this spring.

I am also actively working on several agriculture-related bills, including a livestock siting bill, my Truth in Food Labeling bills, MAC Crop Insurance legislation, a bill to make teaching hours on the farm count for UW Extension specialists and legislation for agricultural truck driver hours. I am also leading one of the bills from the Water Quality Task Force and continuing to promote a property tax exemption for broadband infrastructure.

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As Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions, I am taking a very strong leadership role in building stronger bridges with the agencies. I have monthly, regular meetings scheduled with the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), the Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

In fact, my committee will be holding an Informational Briefing by DATCP on Industrial Hemp this spring inspired by my first meeting with DATCP Interim Secretary Randy Romanski. He suggested that a briefing would benefit legislators and farmers as the department navigates Federal policies and industry changes. It was a good idea that came from an open dialogue - and illustrates the importance of this goal.

There are several issues, like Industrial Hemp, that I plan to study this year. I will continue to work on rural EMS, rural broadband, rural roads, water quality and mental health. I will be monitoring both the Multimodal Local Supplement Grant program (for local, rural roads) and the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program awards. Both of these grant programs closed their application processes in mid-December and will be making awards this spring. These are both programs I fought for in the State Budget and I will do all I can to make sure the funding is dedicated to truly rural needs.

The Water Quality Task Force will be releasing a package of bills this spring, one of which I am already leading. We will also learn more about the results of the Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology Study (SWIGG) and will, hopefully, be able to work on recommendations based on strong data. I am also concerned about the availability of mental health services in our communities and the Emergency Detention processes for local law enforcement. I am studying ways to encourage collaboration so that we can make headway on this issue in the next state budget.

I have renewed my goal to visit every school district in the 17th Senate District at least once during the legislative session. So far this session, I have reached 19 of the 34 school districts I represent. I will continue to attend Towns Association meetings, economic development meetings, Chamber of Commerce Annual Meetings, Farm Bureau meetings and all kinds of gatherings that give me a chance to connect with you directly. My wife Peggy and I really enjoy taking advantage of the many pancake breakfasts, ham dinners, spaghetti suppers and fish fries hosted throughout the 17th District. Nearly every weekend (and some weeknights), we let

you do the cooking for us!

As I travel the district, I will be seeking your input through Listening Sessions and visiting with different community organizations and local leaders. I am also planning another round of Hire Howard job shadow experiences for the coming summer to get-to-know more about the unique work that you do in our communities.

I am looking ahead to 2020 with plans to get things done, make positive connections, represent you to the best of my abilities and make sure that rural Wisconsin matters to the decision-makers in Madison. Please keep in touch and share your input and ideas along the way. Our conversation is essential to fulfilling my goals in the new year.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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