

Reps. Petryk, Pronschinske, Sen. Bernier: Local legislation regarding restitution and misconduct in office becomes law

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Madison – Representative Warren Petryk (R-Town of Washington), Senator Kathy Bernier (R-Chippewa Falls), and Representative Treig Pronschinske (R-Mondovi) along with other local elected officials, were pleased that the governor signed Senate Bill 233 into law today. SB 233 was in response to the former Eau Claire County Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer being found guilty of stealing more than \$625,000 from local taxpayers.

“I’m glad that after today’s actions, we are able to make sure that what happened in Eau Claire County doesn’t happen in Wisconsin again,” said Representative Warren Petryk. “Though not retroactive, this legislation will help our area heal from that past unfortunate criminal breach of public trust and provide a reasonable degree of justice for the people of our State in the future. I also want to thank Steve Chilson and Mark Beckfield, Eau Claire County Board Supervisors, whose leadership helped this bill become law.”

The law was in direct response to a resolution passed by the Eau Claire County Board of

Supervisors requesting a change after state law did not allow restitution from a state-funded pension. The new law will allow a court judge to order the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) to withhold money (up to 25%) for restitution only if all three of the following conditions apply:

1) The crime for which the restitution is ordered is both theft and misconduct in

public office;

2) The crime resulted in a loss to the defendant's employer and the defendant's employer participates in the WRS; and

3) The crime is a felony.

The proposed legislation was modeled on best practices from 25 other states that have laws allowing for court-ordered restitution from a state pension for cases of theft and misconduct in office.

"When this happened it really hit our community hard," said Senator Bernier. "I'm pleased that this legislation received support from both political parties and now our judges and local district attorneys can use this new tool to make future taxpayers whole."

"I unfortunately heard from many other communities throughout the state that experienced something similar to this situation," said Pronschinske. "Now when someone violates the public trust our judicial system can help to make our hardworking taxpayers whole again."