

AARP WI: Frustrated but optimistic that budget proposals helping those 50-plus will be addressed by separate legislation this fall

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MADISON, WI - AARP Wisconsin today voiced its disappointment that many provisions included in the governor's original biennial budget proposal to help Wisconsinites age 50-plus are not part of the 2021-23 budget that he signed into law yesterday.

However, AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson said he is confident that some of these provisions will be revived and passed as separate legislation this fall or funded by the governor through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

"Governor Evers didn't have the authority to add some critical items back into the budget that would have helped many vulnerable Wisconsinites as they age. But his veto of some rainy day transfers means there is some general purpose revenue available to correct these oversights in the fall session," Wilson said.

AARP Wisconsin was supportive of several of the governor's original budget proposals that unfortunately were removed by the Joint Finance Committee and not included in the budget bill passed by the state Assembly and Senate.

They included provisions that would have provided more support for Wisconsin's nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers, help for those who are struggling to afford their prescription medications, and new options for workers across the state to save for their retirement.

“We were also hopeful that more would be done to expand affordable, accessible, reliable high-speed internet service to all parts of Wisconsin, including many underserved rural areas. This is no longer a luxury for folks of all ages – it’s a necessity,” Wilson said.

Wilson said thousands of Wisconsinites made it clear during the Joint Finance Committee’s state budget public hearings this year that all of these issues are extremely important to them. He is still optimistic that much can be done going forward, either by using funding made available through the ARPA, or as separate bills that AARP will support in the fall session.

“We have great faith that our state lawmakers can work together in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation this fall that truly reflects the critical wants and needs of our most vulnerable citizens. In order to achieve this, however, we ask them once again to put politics aside and act in the best interest of all Wisconsinites,” Wilson said.