

Gov. Evers: Excerpts from 2021-23 budget message

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Contact: GovPress@wisconsin.gov

MADISON — Below are excerpts from Gov. Tony Evers' 2021-23 Budget Message, as prepared for delivery. As [previously announced](#), the governor's address will be virtual this year and the stream will be available at 7 p.m. on his Facebook page [here](#) and YouTube [here](#).

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"When I gave my State of the State address last month, I talked about the struggles we've shared this past year, and the challenges we have faced and will face in the days ahead. I know I don't have to tell you how hard this past year has been because we've lived it—you've lived it.

"People across our state and country spent the better part of the last year worried—worried about how you'll see a doctor or afford your prescriptions, worried about taking care of your loved ones from a distance, worried about affording childcare for your kids, and how this pandemic has affected them. I know there have been sleepless nights worrying about finding work or being safe at work, worrying about the future of the business you built from the ground up, worrying about making sure you can keep the lights and heat on at home.

"So, as you're watching tonight filled with a year's worth of worry, I know you're also wondering whether we will claw out of this crisis, where we can go from here, how we get back on track, and what's next."

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"Well, Wisconsin, we aren't going to retrace our steps back to the way things were.

"We aren't going to follow the map back to where we started when this pandemic began.

"After all we've been through, we aren't going to apologize for wanting more for each other—for our neighbors, for our kids, our parents and grandparents, and our state's future.

"So, I want to tell you something tonight and I need you to really hear me—don't let anyone tell you we can't afford to make healthcare more accessible while saving your hard-earned tax dollars. Don't let anyone tell you we can't afford to fully fund our public schools while cutting taxes at the same time. Don't let anyone tell you we can't afford to support our farmers, our rural communities, and our small businesses while protecting our natural resources and investing in new, clean jobs. Don't let anyone tell you we can't spend within our means while still supporting Wisconsinites who need help to recover.

"Because they're wrong. We can. I've got a blueprint that will do just that and make sure we bounce back and better than before."

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"That's why we're going to make unprecedented investments in the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to be able to help support our small businesses and economic development. Our Badger Bounceback agenda makes a larger state investment into the WEDC than the last three budgets combined. We're going to put \$200 million into helping small businesses affected by the pandemic, including helping them retain and rehire the jobs they've lost. And we know that if we want to come out on the other side of this pandemic stronger than ever, we need to commit to investing in innovation and economic growth, too. That's why we're also going to invest \$100 million into a venture capital program to jumpstart innovation and startups in Wisconsin.

"But as I've said all along, if we're going to get serious about economic development in our state, then we have to connect the dots. And you've heard me say that a lot—connect the dots. It means recognizing how every issue our state is facing affects all of the others. We have to understand how having good roads and transportation affects small businesses and farmers getting their product from Point A to Point B. We have to understand how lack of access to affordable housing affects kids in the classroom. We have to understand how lead pollution and poor water quality affects our healthcare system. We have to connect those dots between these issues to make sure we can recover from this crisis. And that's why, in the coming days, the WEDC will also be announcing our administration's vision for economic development to make sure we can bounce back with an economy that works for everyone."

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"Wisconsinites, when I ran to be your governor, I said it was time for a change. And I told you then like I'll tell you tonight—that change won't happen without you.

"That's why, because of you, I'm optimistic. I'm hopeful. Because over the last year, I've seen the heart and grit and resilience of the people of this great state. I believe we can pass a budget with bipartisan support. I believe we can pass a budget that will make sure our state can bounce back and better than it was before this pandemic hit. I believe we can pass a budget that will finally realize the future we've dreamed. I know that the Legislature and I can get this done.

"Change is possible. The future we want to build is possible. Because I know you will hold us to account and demand it."