

Sen. Jacque: Urges governor to sign bipartisan state budget

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DE PERE, WI... State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere) today urged Gov. Evers to sign the Legislature's bi-partisan 2021-23 state budget, which makes transformational investments in workforce, healthcare, and Northeast Wisconsin while providing tax relief for middle class families and active-duty military members. The budget passed the full State Senate earlier tonight by a vote of 23-9, and both legislative chambers with bi-partisan support including Democratic Senate Minority Leader Janet Bewley.

"It has been wonderful to engage with my constituents at meetings and budget listening sessions throughout the 1st Senate District, and to work with my colleagues to make an impact for our area and the entire state," said Jacque.

Sen. Jacque highlighted the following initiatives:

State Tax Relief

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Exempting Military Pay from State Taxation - The budget's tax plan makes military service less taxing by exempting active-duty income from state taxation, incorporating legislation authored by Sen. Jacque over the past two sessions. "Many native Wisconsin service members change their legal addresses outside the state just to avoid being taxed while on active duty, and they never return," said Jacque, adding, "The state tax code should encourage service members to return to Wisconsin's civilian workforce, instead of sending these skilled individuals to the

vast majority of other states that already exempt active duty pay.”

Jacque’s motion enjoys strong bipartisan support and unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Revenue earlier this year as a standalone bill.

Middle Class Tax Relief – The typical Wisconsin family will save \$1,200 dollars over the next two years thanks to \$3.4 billion in Middle Class Tax Relief. It reduces income taxes by over 10% for a median-income family in Wisconsin, adds a new tax credit for children and dependents, and provides property tax relief.

Northeast Wisconsin Projects

Brown County Southern Bridge – Sen. Jacque secured a funding commitment for the project last session, and was pleased to support further enumeration in the 2021-'23 budget to help speed construction of this critical public safety and economic development infrastructure.

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UW-Green Bay Cofrin Technology and Education Center – The budget funds a major *academic* capital project at UWGB for the first time in more than 20 years, according to the university. Sen. Jacque had submitted a letter in support of the project to members of the Legislature’s budget committee.

Park Improvements – The budget includes over \$6 million in facility improvements to enhance outdoor recreation activities in Door County’s Potawatomi, Rock Island, and Peninsula State Parks, while preserving the environmentally-sensitive lands, waters, and habitats on which they depend. The budget also funds improvements to the Collins Marsh Wildlife Area just outside of the 1st Senate District. As a member of the State Building Commission, Sen. Jacque will be able to further facilitate the prompt completion of these projects.

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Help for Our Most Vulnerable

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Low-Income Dental Services Pilot Project Expanded – Brown County is part of a four-county pilot project under BadgerCare that comes closer to meeting dentists' normal fees in order to improve access to care for children from low-income families. The Enhanced Dental Reimbursement Pilot Program which began in October 2016 with Brown, Marathon, Racine and Polk counties, will be expanded throughout the First District and the entire state under this budget, as proposed by Sen. Jacque last session (2019 SB 636).

“This important investment tackles the chronic issue of underfunding and low reimbursement rates for healthcare overseen by the federal government,” Sen. Jacque said, noting, “This pilot project is demonstrated to lead to better lifetime health outcomes for folks who otherwise often lack access for higher quality care, and a significant reduction in the number of dental-related ER visits in the four counties, and I look forward to similar success statewide.”

Early Access to Autism Diagnosis and Treatment – As a result of a motion by and similar to standalone legislation from Sen. Jacque, the budget includes a 15 percent reimbursement rate increase for the autism treatment code that gets billed the most under Medicaid. The proposal will significantly reduce access challenges that exist for Wisconsin children and families in need of access to autism treatment, especially rural families, according to Wisconsin autism organizations. It is estimated that 1300 children with autism are currently on waitlists for treatment.

“There is a huge return on investment for early access to diagnosis and evidence-based treatment, for the child, their family, and the state. This increased funding will reduce the waitlist and provide more access to services for the underserved populations in our state,” stated Sen. Jacque.

Chiropractic Care – Sen. Jacque advocated for funding added to the budget to increase access to chiropractic services for Medicaid patients and improve clinical outcomes, while reducing exposure to prescription drugs and costly surgeries.

Aid for Veterans' Programs - Wisconsin's County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) provide outstanding advocacy, support and service at the local level, filling the gaps between other veterans programs. As a result of Sen. Jacque's requests, for the first time in years the budget increases funding for this vital program, doubling the increase Gov. Evers proposed. The plan also raises increases reimbursement for Wisconsin's American Legion Veterans Service Office, which helps veterans obtain the benefits they have earned in service to our country.

Other Investments

Treatment Courts -

The budget increased funding for Treatment Alternatives and Diversions in Wisconsin's court system by \$2.5 Million annually, a partial funding of bipartisan legislation Sen. Jacque was the Senate lead author of last session.

Manitowoc Prosecutor -

The budget funds an additional Assistant District Attorney for Manitowoc County among several additional positions allocated to most understaffed statewide, as proposed under previous legislation by Sen. Jacque.

Water Quality -

The budget increases funding for producer-led watershed protection grants by a quarter million dollars and fully funds a second county conservation staffperson statewide, priorities of Sen. Jacque as the Chair of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Nutrient Management Task Force and National Caucus of Environmental Legislators State Lead.

Building a Better Budget -

Pending partial vetoes, the 2021-'23 budget would be Wisconsin's second-ever positively balanced budget ever under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

(GAAP).

Supporting Education -

Under the Legislature's proposal, Wisconsin would finally return to 2/3 state funding for education, provide school levy tax relief, and provide significant additional aid for special education reimbursement and high-transportation cost school districts.

On the Road to Transportation Improvement -

Senator Jacque proposed legislation earlier this session to transfer vehicle-related sales taxes to the state Transportation Fund. For practical purposes, that is what occurred in the budget, and the result in a dramatic reduction in putting spending on the state credit card through bonding, and a dramatic increase in investment in local road funding that has local government groups calling this the "best transportation budget ever."

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin's First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.