

Rep. Krug: On the 2022 State of the State address

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Governor Evers touted his record on small business support and economic recovery tonight at the State of State address. It is unbelievable that he has ignored legislation that has been delivered to his desk that would have invested in and gone a long way in stabilizing many sectors of our statewide economy and communities here in Central and Northern WI.

With over \$900M in federal money available (and yet to be invested in the state), Governor Evers vetoed the Mill Bill (Assembly Bill 367) last July. This bill alone had the opportunity to save thousands of jobs not only in Wisconsin Rapids but all throughout the northern half of the State of Wisconsin. The delay to support the paper and forestry industry has had incredible ripple effects on our friends and families throughout the state. Hundreds of independent owners and operators of logging operations, trucking companies, convenience stores, restaurants, and more are still waiting for the support that their small businesses were promised.

The support many of these folks depend on is the Rapids mill being active, and drawing the timber to be trucked in and processed in communities that our small businesses are dependent upon, from Wisconsin Rapids to the Northwoods. We aren't discussing short term money, but an investment in long-term business activity that sustains our communities.

\$50M from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) combined with low interest loans and private financing could have encouraged a fair, efficient sale of the mill in Wisconsin Rapids and brought workers back through the doors. Governor Evers decided to pass on this opportunity for central Wisconsin.

When Governor Evers says his investment was enough to help Wisconsin

businesses, he left out the second biggest industry in our state. It's time to fix that problem.

Waiting for the federal government to send more money isn't as helpful as putting the money we already have to good use.

The legislature needs to make up for the lack of leadership in the Governor's office and take up a veto override, and at the very least give the forestry economy and all those affected by it to recover from the devastating slowdown of the pandemic years.