

Rep. Schraa: Comments on the State of the State address

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(Madison, WI) Rep. Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh) was surprised that the governor forgot to mention, in his State of the State address last night, the crisis at the Department of Corrections (DOC) that is spiraling out of control.

“While the governor was busy patting himself on the back for Republican accomplishments, I was waiting to hear his explanation for the crisis at DOC. Security staff are being forced to cover extra shifts because of the 26.8% vacancy rate statewide, 51% at Waupun in my district.

“Can you imagine how dangerous it is to work in a maximum security prison with only half of the necessary staff? These dedicated men and women are overworked, underpaid, burned out, and retiring or finding other employment. How do we retain current employees and attract new officers who are willing to stay? This death spiral can only be solved by immediate and significant raises. Right now, conditions are so bad that many new officers just leave after completing their training.

“So, my question for the governor is, ‘Why didn’t the DOC request raises, and why didn’t you, Mr. Governor, include raises in your budget?’

I have been sounding the alarm on this catastrophe. You can fix the problem right now, but you refuse to solve it.

“I just received word today that Waupun Correctional Institution had another staff assaulted by an inmate. You are responsible for this Mr. Governor.

“Let me be clear. Something even worse will happen. When programs are cut, inmate tensions increase. When officers work 16-hour shifts day after day, they cannot be at their peak performance. I am amazed that no one has fallen asleep at the wheel on the way home from work—yet. I am astounded that there hasn’t been a prison riot—yet. I am astonished that the governor is playing political games with people’s lives, but I shouldn’t be.”