

Sen. Jacque: Jacque bills to empower, protect vulnerable people head to governor

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MADISON, WI... New initiatives to further empower vulnerable individuals are on their way to the Governor's desk today as the State Assembly passed legislation to strengthen adults-at-risk reporting and plan a tax-free Wisconsin saving account program for the disabled.

"As a society, we need to fortify the systems we rely on to protect our most vulnerable members," said State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), co-author of the measures. "The proposals further our mission to help ensure safe, fulfilling lives for the defenseless ones among us."

Investigating Adults-at-Risk Abuse ([Senate Bill 395](#)) – Currently, Adult Protective Services (APS) may decide not to investigate reports of abuse of adults with disabilities (adults ages 18-59). However, investigations are required for any reports of abuse of elder adults (age 60 and over). This bill, co-authored with Rep. Donna Rozar (R-Marshfield), makes investigations of adults-at-risk reports also mandatory. It is supported by the Wisconsin Counties Association and many groups advocating for the disabled.

"Adults with disabilities are seven times more likely to be the victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation," Sen. Jacque said. "This simple change will increase protections for adults with disabilities ages 18-59 with reported abuse."

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Account Participation Act ([Senate Bill 158](#)) – Under current federal law, states may establish ABLE programs, which allow individuals classified with having a disability before age 26 to have a tax-exempt

savings account set up in their name to cover certain expenses, including: education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology, and other services. Enrollment in this program does not affect eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid. This measure requires the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions to examine various aspects of establishing a Wisconsin ABLE program for state residents.

Sen. Jacque, co-author of the proposal with State Rep. Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz), said that Wisconsin is currently just one of seven states that do not have their own ABLE account program, although state residents may open accounts in other states.

“Growth of ABLE accounts in Wisconsin has been slow, perhaps because the state doesn’t host a general webpage or have its own program to promote,” Sen. Jacque said. “This bill should move our state closer to making these accounts more accessible and widely adopted by Wisconsin families who need them.”

These bills are Sen. Jacque’s latest efforts to protect our most vulnerable. Last month, Gov. Evers signed a Jacque bill requiring training for guardianship, the most restrictive legal arrangement for incapacitated adults, to make sure decisions are made in their best interests.