

Sen. Kooyenga: Senate passes seven Kooyenga bills

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MADISON – Yesterday the State Senate passed seven bills authored by Sen. Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield). These bills build on recent successes like expanding telehealth, cutting taxes, and expanding access to opportunity, moving the ball forward for the people of Wisconsin—most of them on a bipartisan basis.

[Senate Bill 344](#), authored with Rep. Cody Horlacher, essentially gives more flexibility for Registered Interior Designers to perform their work. Under current law, interior designers must pay for and get approval from an architect for their interior remodeling plans on commercial projects. This can be a costly procedural step. Among other things, this bill allows Registered Interior Designers to seal their own plans without necessarily paying for the consultation of an architect and gives Registered Interior Designers representation on the board overseeing their profession.

“This bipartisan bill was the product of several years of work and extensive negotiations between interior designers and architects. I am glad to see all that work pay off in a bill that is agreeable to both sides,” Kooyenga said.

[Assembly Bill 420 \(Senate Bill 423\)](#), authored with Rep. Cindi Duchow, provides funding parity for independent charter schools authorized by tribal colleges. Under current law, the Department of Public Instruction funds these tribal charter schools at a lesser amount than charter schools that are authorized by a non-tribal entity. This funding disparity in the 2020-21 school year is nearly \$450 per student, \$8,719 versus \$9,165. This bill corrects that.

“This bill corrects a problematic funding disparity that put kids in charter schools authorized by tribal colleges at a disadvantage. I am pleased to see bipartisan

agreement to correct it," said Kooyenga.

Senate Bill 695, authored with Rep. David Steffen, eliminates an arbitrary limit on the number of charter schools that a tribal college is allowed to authorize. Under current law, the College of Menomonee Nation and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College (LCOOC) are only allowed to authorize a maximum of six independent charter schools between the two of them (Independent charter schools are part of the public school system). These caps do not apply to non-tribal authorizers. This is a constraint on public school education options for students in sovereign Native American nations. By removing this cap, the tribal colleges will no longer have to turn potential applicants away.

"It's unfortunate that this bill became a partisan issue, but I hope the governor ultimately agrees that public schools serving Indigenous Peoples shouldn't be subjected to limits that do not apply to the rest of the state," Kooyenga said.

Senate Bill 833, authored with Rep. David Murphy, eliminates the sunset date of the Dual Enrollment Credential Grant Program. This program assists teachers in getting credentials that allow them to teach college level courses to high school students who are pursuing early college credit. Funding for the program was included in the 2021-23 budget, but the program itself expired in 2021. This bill eliminates the sunset date. In addition, Senate Amendment 1 allows independent charter school students to participate in the Early College Credit Program upon the effective date of the bill.

"My office recently met with a group of high achieving students who said the Early College Credit program is very important to them. It's been an honor to work on this initiative and enable more high school teachers to help students earn college credit," Kooyenga said.

Senate Bill 786, authored with Rep. Shannon Zimmerman, requires the executive branch to create rules adopting cybersecurity standards for state agencies, including for the purchase of technology used by state employees. This bill requires the standards to be consistent with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity framework. This is a response to the growing number of state workers using devices on less secure, non-state networks and the rising prevalence of cyber-attacks.

"State government is far from immune to the growing threat of cyber-attacks. This

bill passed committee on a 3-2 vote—a missed opportunity for bipartisan agreement on a serious problem, but I hope the governor sees the wisdom of getting ahead of this threat,” Kooyenga said.

Senate Bill 694, authored with Rep. Terry Katsma, creates a property tax exemption for non-profit community health centers that treat at least 30,000 patients per year and are 25 acres or less in size. Current law limits the footprint of these nonprofit healthcare providers to 10 acres. Community health centers provide care to patients who otherwise may not be able to afford healthcare and often absorb significant costs. That’s why current law provides a property tax exemption.

“This bill came at the request of the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center in Milwaukee, which has the strategy of locating multiple smaller clinics in neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee. I felt it was wrong for SSCHC to be unintentionally penalized for this laudable approach,” Kooyenga said.

Senate Bill 339, authored with Rep. Shae Sortwell, essentially aligns state law with federal law as it relates to capital loss deductions. Under current law, investors who take a loss on the sale of an asset like stock can subtract up to \$500 per year of that loss from their ordinary income when filing state income taxes. The rest has to be subtracted in future years until the loss is “used up,” creating more complexity and paperwork that disproportionately impacts small businesses and middle income people. This bill increases the \$500 to \$3000, the amount allowable under federal law, eliminating a tax code complication and bringing us closer to conformity with the IRS Code.

“Tax law usually isn’t exciting, but this tax code update directly affects people trying to save money and build a nest egg. This is one example of my goal of prioritizing getting results over retweets,” Kooyenga said.