

Sen. Marklein: Bipartisan work in the legislature

Posted on Friday, Apr 1, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

As I travel the communities of the 17th Senate District, people often ask me – “why can’t you all just get along.” I often reply with – “for the most part we do, but compromise, collaboration and harmony do not make for a very compelling story.”

That’s right – it’s not interesting to read or hear about a bunch of legislators getting along, working together and passing legislation that we all agree on. But you may be surprised to learn that 83% of all of the legislation passed during the 2021-22 legislative session was passed with bipartisan support, including the massive state budget bill.

I recently asked the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) for a [summary](#) of all of the bills that were passed with bipartisan support during the current legislative session. According to the LRB, “as of March 22, 2022, 255 bills have been enacted or vetoed, and 211 of those bills, or 83%, were passed by both the Senate and Assembly with bipartisan votes on passage or concurrence.”

The LRB counts all roll call votes for which at least one member of each party cast an “aye” vote or a voice vote as bipartisan. While some legislation, such as bills that include spending, must have a roll call vote in which every legislator casts an individual vote, any legislator can also request a roll call vote on any bill. The voice vote is used for most non-controversial, bipartisan bills that do not require an individual vote.

Every bill that I have worked all of the way through the legislative process has been bipartisan. As of today (4/1/22), nine of my bills have been signed into law and an additional four are pending action by the Governor. My bipartisan bills that have been signed into law include:

- Act 1 & Act 2 – both bills included tax reforms and updates related to the state income tax code and tax treatment for partnerships and S Corporations.
- Act 6 – allows Wisconsin to continue participating in the Powerball lottery when the program expanded internationally.
- Act 11 – counting UW Extension specialist's on-the-farm teaching hours toward university teaching hours to encourage more time working directly with farmers.
- Act 91 – designating 123.4 miles of State Highway 21 from Sparta to Oshkosh (through Necedah) as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway.
- Act 108 – closes a loophole in state statute related to unregistered vehicles during a state of emergency.

These are important statistics because a bipartisan vote on passage or concurrence means that there were likely bipartisan votes throughout the committee process in both houses. This means that legislators on both sides of the aisle found merit in the legislation, participated in public hearings on it and offered their support along the way. In addition to my bills listed above, additional examples of strong bipartisan legislation include:

- Act 9 – related to Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM) and the costs of prescription drugs.
- Act 28 – updated stalking statutes to add cyberstalking.
- Act 72 – prohibiting placement of a child with a family member who has a record of crimes against children.
- Act 74 – designating the Bart Starr Memorial Bridge in Green Bay.
- Act 75 – related to use-of-force by law enforcement officers.
- Act 76 – relating to elderabuse.
- Act 82 – relating to disclosure of employment files for law enforcement officers in the hiring process.
- Act 92 – relating to the agricultural export initiatives.
- Act 156 – relating to tax treatment for Restaurant Revitalization Grants.
- Act 159 – relating to resident-tuition rates for children of relocating service members who choose Wisconsin.
- Act 185 – providing grants for police body cameras.
- ...and more.

The state budget is another strong example of bipartisanship. There are negotiations, compromises and votes that occur throughout the budget process that are bipartisan. We work hard to consider all of the requests and priorities of

legislators and the governor as we craft the legislature's version of the budget. In the Assembly, four Democrats and all of the Republican members voted for the budget. In the Senate, all Republican members and three Democrats, including the Senate Minority Leader, voted for the budget. Then, the Governor signed it.

Unfortunately, the Governor has vetoed at least 16 bipartisan bills that were supported by both Republicans and Democrats. These included:

- Assembly Bill (AB) 1, 23 and 24 – all related to COVID-19 including prohibiting vaccine mandates and closing churches.
- AB 191 – which would have eliminated the personal property tax (PPT).
- AB 293 – which would have made Wisconsin a Second Amendment Sanctuary State and protected the rights of gun owners.
- AB 383 – which would have made the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) make an exception for eligibility rules related to transfer students who transferred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- AB 407 – which would have made Legislative Human Resources a stand-alone service agency.
- SB 89 – which would have made the NREMT exam optional for rural EMS departments to aid in recruitment and retention.

Again, I am proud of my work with all of my colleagues in the legislature to advance bills that make a difference. As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov or call 608-266-0703.