

# Sen. Marklein: Drama-free legislation re-cap

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The legislature has been in session frequently over the last several weeks to make progress before we adjourn our spring session in March. The vast majority of legislation we have passed has been unanimous or bi-partisan, which means you probably haven't heard about it because there is no drama. The media loves to tell you about our disagreements. They rarely tell you about all of the work we do together.

Following are highlights of our work that you probably didn't hear about yet. Please note that I did not author these bills, but I supported all of them:

**Senate Bill (SB) 429 - Construction of motor vehicle license plates** - If you happen to see me on the road, you may notice that half of my license plate is no longer legible. This is due to the materials that were used to manufacture license plates in Wisconsin during the last several years, as well as the age of my plates. This bill requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to upgrade the plate sheeting to a high-definition, prismatic sheeting to prevent peeling. It also requires the department to create a regular license plate replacement schedule that will replace every plate in the state over a 10-year period and then follow a 10-year cycle.

**SB 573 - Electric vehicle charging stations** - This bill creates a statutory structure for private industry to invest in electric vehicle charging stations. While most day-to-day charging occurs at a vehicle owner's home, private sector businesses see an opportunity to offer electric vehicle charging opportunities for a fee in a safe, reliable atmosphere with added benefits for the consumer. This legislation creates the structure for this forward-thinking industry.

**SB 339 - Increasing the net capital loss deduction** – As a CPA, I love this bill. It aligns state law with federal law to eliminate confusion for taxpayers and brings Wisconsin one step closer to conformity with the Internal Revenue Code. It increases the maximum annual net capital loss offset for Wisconsin income tax purposes from \$500 to \$3,000 or \$1,500 for married individuals filing separately. In practice, taxpayers subtract capital losses from capital gains when computing the amount of gain subject to state income tax. For example, when a Wisconsinite sells stock for less than the purchase price, taxable capital gains are reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The low annual offset means that some people take years to use up the loss in this calculation. In my past professional life, I had clients who passed away with unused losses. This change would go a long way toward fixing this issue.

**Assembly Bill (AB) 717 - Restaurant Revitalization Grant tax treatment** – There is no doubt that restaurants were one of the industries that was hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation aligns state law with the federal treatment of taxes on Restaurant Revitalization grants. There are more than 2,000 restaurants in Wisconsin, including many in my Senate district that received these funds from the federal government. This bill makes these funds non-taxable for Wisconsin tax purposes starting in tax year 2021. This is similar to our actions related to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) last year.

**Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 101 - Constitutional Amendment to ban “Zuckerbucks” in elections** – In an effort to protect the integrity of our elections, we passed a constitutional amendment to ban private entities and wealthy individuals from circumventing campaign finance laws and buying direct access to our election officials and election process. No matter which side of the aisle, we should never allow a private entity or a rich person to buy access to our election process. Unfortunately, this happened in Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay in 2020 and it cannot happen again. Individuals paid by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg actually worked, in person, and had direct access to voter information in these communities. They were not municipal or county employees. They were sent to “help” in order to get access.

This is a constitutional amendment which means it needs to pass two sessions of the legislature and then it will be on a ballot for all voters statewide. Our recent vote is the first step. We will pass it again in 2023. Then, you will get to vote on it.

**SB 520 - Bonding authorized for a new juvenile justice facility** – The Senate passed legislation to authorize bonding so that Wisconsin can take meaningful steps

toward closing the Lincoln Hills School in Irma, WI and relocate it to the Milwaukee area. This is the right thing to do for the youth and their families who are involved in the juvenile justice program. We must move this facility closer to the majority of young people it serves, and their families, to better facilitate visits and rehabilitation programs.

**Workforce Development and Recovery** – we passed several bills that encourage able-bodied Wisconsinites to work. One proposal requires individuals to take work that is offered to them in order to remain eligible for public benefits. Another proposal provides an opportunity for employers to report declined job offers and non-takers to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), which operates the Unemployment Insurance program. This is meant to give employers a way to tell DWD when they make an offer to a worker who declines it in order to stay on unemployment for an extended period of time. Finally, AB 937 indexes how long a person is eligible for unemployment compensation in relation to the state's unemployment rate. When the rate is lower, the number of weeks is reduced because there are jobs available.

**AB 827 - Organized retail theft** – Many of us have read about thefts at stores that are organized and orchestrated. Groups of criminals steal items and then re-sell them online to make a profit. This is causing serious problems for retailers, driving up the prices of consumer goods and exacerbating workforce challenges. This bill makes multiple thefts by three or more individuals at the same time and in the same place, in concert, one crime and the value of the property is aggregated. This makes the crime much more serious, with much larger consequences than current law and we hope it deters future thefts.

This is just a sample of the many bills we have passed over the last several weeks. Again, most of these bills passed unanimously or with bi-partisan support. You won't likely hear about them in the mainstream media because there is no flash or bang, but they are important nonetheless. I am proud of our work on your behalf.

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](mailto:sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov) or call 608-266-0703.