

Sen. Marklein: The budget beat goes on

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The Wisconsin State Budget was signed into law on July 9, 2021. After months of public hearings, hard work, deliberations and negotiations, the legislature delivered one of the best budgets in history to the people of Wisconsin. We funded all of our priorities while returning more than \$3 billion to taxpayers.

But the budget beat goes on...and it will continue throughout 2022, even when the legislature is not officially in session.

There is approximately \$285 million in the most recent state budget that was set aside in the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) Supplemental Account for further action. The JFC Supplemental Account is akin to a savings account that sets aside funds in the budget for programs and ideas that aren't fully designed yet or required additional study.

State agencies can access these funds, and other state financial actions, by submitting a request through the 13.10 process. The 13.10 process is a way for the JFC to take action outside of the formal budget process. In addition, Executive Sessions may be held to consider legislation that has a fiscal impact.

The JFC recently met in a 13.10 meeting and an Executive Session to take action on several pending requests and bills. Among the 24 items we considered were several ag-related programs, a Nurse Educator grant program, funding for an opioid and methamphetamine data system and tax relief for restaurants that received Restaurant Revitalization grants from the federal government in 2021.

I am particularly proud of our work on the ag-related requests we approved. These items have been on my priority list for a long time and we were successfully able to

move them across the finish line. We approved \$558,400 for the Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) to work with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to promote the export of agricultural goods outside of Wisconsin and the United States. We also approved \$2 million for UW Extension faculty and outreach specialists who provide research and support to farmers in our communities.

The Nurse Educator Grant program was created in the budget for the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to provide fellowships and loan repayment assistance to individuals who are planning to teach in order to educate future nurses. We know we have a nursing shortage in Wisconsin. We also have a shortage of people who can train new nurses. We created this program at HEAB so that the university system, private colleges and our technical college system can all access these funds for their teachers

We also passed a bill that creates an opioid and methamphetamine data system to continue our work to battle drug addiction in our state. This system will centralize, collect, format, analyze and disseminate information on opioid and methamphetamine use so that law enforcement and health agencies can use it to better address addiction-related issues. Other states have created a similar system and it has been very effective in focusing their efforts and investments in combatting the crisis.

Finally, we passed a bill that would provide \$27.2 million in tax relief for restaurant-businesses who received Restaurant Revitalization grants from the federal government in response to COVID-19. Approximately 63 local restaurants received these grants and will save a combined \$300,000 in taxes when this passes. Statewide, 2,095 restaurants received these grants. This bill exempts these grants from Wisconsin taxes in the same way as we exempted taxes on Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) grants in 2021. The Federal government already exempted these grants. The Wisconsin Assembly passed this bill on January 20, 2022, but it had to also be passed by the JFC before it could reach the State Senate because it impacts state revenues. I am optimistic that the State Senate will pass this bill as well.

As you can see, even though we finished the main work on the state budget last summer, we will continue to consider requests and legislation for many months to come. The work of governing is year-round and I am honored to be a part of this important 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 or call 608-266-0703.