

# Weekly GOP radio address: Sen. Wimberger on Joint Finance Committee taking budget action on criminal justice

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I'm State Senator Eric Wimberger from the 30th Senate District in Northeast Wisconsin with this week's radio address on the important issues surrounding Criminal Justice.

The Joint Finance Committee voted this week on a transformative plan to clear backlogs in our courts. For many years low pay at the State Public Defender and District Attorney caused many experienced attorneys to leave. Retaining qualified attorneys to prosecute or defend highly complicated criminal cases was a challenge. We've adjusted the pay progression system and attorney pay to incentivize speedy case disposition with expert level execution.

Also, difference in pay sources at different rates for private bar contracts are causing court backlog. Some private bar lawyers for the indigent are funded through the county while others are funded by the State. If an attorney can choose pay by selecting cases from particular funding sources, the obvious result is a serious backlog of cases on the lower pay scale. We've equalized the hourly rates so there isn't a disincentive to take cases from the Public Defender.

Finally, we made an adjustment to elected district attorney pay. Currently there comes a time when an experienced elected DA can make a significantly higher salary by becoming an assistant DA and quitting the elected position. Rural counties are losing experienced elected DAs to metro areas, preferring to be a higher paid

lower ranking assistant than the lower paid senior. Rural Counties sometimes go periods without a District attorney as a result, and other county prosecutors have to substitute in to keep the community safe. We've adjusted pay to incentivize experienced District Attorneys to stay.

The result will be great for our community, victims, constitutional rights, and justice. The proposals are bipartisan, and I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support them when we vote on the complete budget in the coming months.