

# Howard Marklein: Dull legislation and show-stopping votes

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The State Senate recently passed two problem-solving bills that I drafted on behalf of the people I serve. They are dull. They are boring. They are anything but flashy. But they are necessary. This happened on the same day as several particularly show-stopping actions. Read on.

Senate Bill (SB) 163 changes one word of statute to reflect reality. The leader of the University of Wisconsin (UW) Extension is a “Dean” rather than a “Chancellor.” For the purposes of membership on the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council (WAEWD), statutes needed to be updated so the right title could be appointed to serve on this board.

SB 218 creates the structure for a grant program for local governments to seek assistance to purchase new communications equipment to be able to participate in WISCOM – the new public safety interoperable communication system upgrade.

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In the most recent state budget, the legislature set aside \$2 million to fund this grant program. The Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is in the process of building a new WISCOM System to support communications between law enforcement, EMS, and other first responders. The system is used by state agencies as well as local units of government/local first responder agencies such as county sheriffs, local EMS, and police departments.

In order to be compatible with the new WISCOM system, many local agencies will need to purchase new radios. New radios cost \$5,000-\$7,000 each. The bill creates

a grant program to assist local governments/agencies with the purchase of new radios. The grant program will require a 20% local match.

Considering all of the other exciting things happening in the State Capitol on September 14, 2023, you probably didn't hear a whisper about these bills. Most media attention was focused on the Senate's override of three of Governor Evers' vetoes, our rejection of Meagan Wolfe, the Administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) and the Assembly's passage of the Iowa-Model for redistricting. These were definitely the show-stoppers.

The Senate voted to override three of the Governor's vetoes. We rejected the Governor's veto that increased taxes on Wisconsinites by creating an automatic property tax increase for the next 400 years. We also rejected the Governor's veto of the middle class tax cut. Finally we rejected the Governor's veto of a bill that protects consumer choice to install gas stoves and other appliances in their own homes! These three overrides are now before the State Assembly.

Right or wrong, sometimes a team needs to replace the coach to move forward. This is what WEC needs. We need to replace Meagan Wolfe and start fresh. We need election officials, all over Wisconsin, to receive clear guidance and instructions without the political shadow that Ms. Wolfe cannot shake. It's time to install new leadership in this important agency. This is why I voted to reject Meagan Wolfe's appointment to WEC.

Finally, the State Assembly passed Assembly Bill (AB) 415 - the Iowa model for redistricting. I have always been open to considering the Iowa model for redistricting and I am pleased that we are moving in that direction. I have studied the Iowa model extensively and have communicated with legislators in Iowa about it over the last several years.

I believe that adopting this model will avoid a lot of unnecessary court action and will hopefully bring two very polarized sides of this issue together. This model requires the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to draw redistricting plans. I think this is a good idea to bring us all together.

In southwest Wisconsin, we can look to our neighbors on the other side of the river and see that it is working well. I am open to the idea and pleased that we are moving in this direction.

*-Marklein, R-Spring Green, is co-chair of the Joint Finance Committee and represents the 17th Senate District.*