

Howard Marklein: My legislation game plan

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 12, 2023

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

As coaches all over the 17th Senate District design game plans for Friday night, I have been working hard to design a game plan for the legislation that I am working through the legislative process this fall and into spring. Now that the State Budget is finished, I am dedicating my attention to individual pieces of legislation that will impact the communities and people I serve. Most of the bills I am working on are ideas that come from people I represent. I sincerely appreciate all of the input and ideas that have been shared with me to solve problems, improve programs and meet the needs of our communities.

Following is a partial list of the legislation I am working on. As I continue to fine-tune other bills, I will add to this game plan and share more details with you. Stay tuned.

Senate Bill (SB) 218 – Wisconsin Interoperability System for Communications (WISCOM) Grants – This legislation creates the structure for a grant program for public safety interoperable communication system upgrades. We set aside funding in the state budget for this purpose and this legislation creates the structure to make grants. While much of the cost for replacing the technology and infrastructure updates is a responsibility of the state, many local agencies will likely need to update their radios and associated technology. SB 218 creates a grant program to assist local agencies with those costs.

>> 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.](#)

SB 221 – MedFlight staffing requirements – This legislation changes staffing requirements on aircraft that transports children between hospitals. This change will

allow a certified respiratory care practitioner to fulfill a required staffing position. There is an expansive list of the types of medical professionals who fulfill this requirement. We are adding another type of healthcare provider who typically accompanies a child on these flights to the list of eligible staff.

SB 389 – Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Updates – This legislation includes a long list of updates for the Wisconsin tax code to achieve parity with Federal tax code. We pass similar legislation with updates to our code nearly every legislative session.

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 5 – Federal Funds Constitutional Amendment – This is a resolution that would offer all Wisconsin voters a chance to vote on whether we should add an amendment to Wisconsin’s constitution that would include the legislature in decisions to expend Federal funds. This type of resolution must pass two consecutive sessions. We passed this resolution last session, therefore it needs to pass a second consecutive session and then the question will go to all voters. The legislature surrendered this authority in the 1930s.

SB 249 – Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial Highway – This legislation, which I authored with Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), designates State Highway 80 as the Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial Highway in memory and recognition of the men and women who served in Iraq.

SB 325 – Broadband Grant Program Reforms – Nearly every session, I author legislation that improves and reforms the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program. The reforms we make each session dial-in the state’s efforts to expand broadband and reach truly unserved locations. As Federal funding for broadband expansion continues to increase, we will also continue to refine the ways Wisconsin expands broadband to those who are not connected or struggle with unacceptable speeds and reliability.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Expansion – I am working with my colleagues to write a bill that would change state law to allow private businesses to install and sell high-speed EV charging directly to consumers. The Federal government has awarded \$78 million for incentives for Wisconsin to help private businesses like gas stations, restaurants, retailers, etc. to install and offer high-speed charging to consumers. Current law does not allow this. We must change statute to capture the federal funds and execute the Department of Transportation’s (DOT’s) Wisconsin Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan.

<https://wisconsin.gov/Documents/projects/WEVI-plan-final-22-0914.pdf>

Crisis Now Facility designation – This legislation is an important first step in creating regional Crisis Now centers to receive people in mental health crisis. I am working with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to move this idea forward for Wisconsin and we discovered that we need to create a new facility designation. These facilities are very unique and current law does not have an appropriate set of rules to govern them at this time. Law enforcement is very interested in this issue.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Board Membership – I am authoring legislation to add two members to the state EMS Advisory Board. I believe that this board must include rural voices. My bill would add two members from rural EMS departments. These members must be either Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs).

UW Richland Economic Development – Finally, Rep. Kurtz and I are authoring a bill to send \$2 million to Richland County to help in redeveloping the UW Richland site. These funds would be for anything that Richland County decides is needed; maintenance of the site, new infrastructure, renovations, marketing, etc. It is simply meant to support the county's efforts to move forward.

Again, my game plan continues to evolve as new ideas and challenges are shared with me. This list is incomplete and there are additional ideas that are not fully developed, but I will continue to brief you and share my game plan as the session continues.

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