

# Rep. Knodl: Reacting to Gov. Evers' proposed budget

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Someone should tell Governor Evers that Groundhog Day was two weeks ago. His third budget address Wednesday night delivered the same divisive liberal wish list that he has trotted out in past years.

He did open his speech on a high note—our state currently enjoys \$7 billion surplus. That is something to celebrate. However, that surplus is a mixed blessing because it also presents a strong temptation in Madison to blow this windfall to grow government. Unfortunately, the governor has again given in to this temptation by presenting a bloated budget proposal more radical and expansive than ever, amounting to a 23 percent increase in spending in its first year!

Much of that surplus is the result of a decade of sound fiscal management by the Republican-led legislature. We have cut taxes by over \$22 billion, yet our revenues are higher than ever and continue to grow. These new revenues have allowed us to make historic investments in our schools, roads, and communities. Now is not the time to reverse course and return to the same, tired old budgets of exploding deficits and sky-high taxes. The fact that our revenues continue to grow every time we cut taxes proves that our state remains grossly overtaxed.

Sadly, the surplus we worked so hard to cultivate isn't nearly enough to satisfy the governor's hunger for growing government. Despite our state's strong fiscal position, the governor is proposing \$1.4 billion in new taxes that will kill jobs and drive investment from our state, the very growth dividend that brought us these surpluses.

I am pleased that the governor included my initiative to eliminate the personal

property tax, a bipartisan issue I have led on for years. We will work together on that area of agreement and finally kill that burden on our small businesses once and for all. But we also need bigger and bolder tax reform to reduce our income and property tax burdens.

Where do we go from here? Now that the ball is in the legislature's court, step one will certainly involve eliminating the portions that do not belong in the budget to begin with. Non-fiscal policy provisions such as providing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants and legalizing recreational marijuana should undergo due diligence in the legislative process as standalone bills, not slipped into the budget bill. I can see us finding common ground on ensuring our local governments are able to fund critical services, fully supporting our law enforcement, and expanding educational opportunities so all of our young people can succeed.

Over the coming months, I look forward to listening to constituents and working with my colleagues on producing a serious budget that delivers significant tax relief for all of Wisconsin's taxpayers while ensuring the taxes they do pay deliver a sound return on investment.