

Sen. Jacque, Rep. Kitchens: Deliver big win for Potawatomi Tower Preservation

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MADISON... The Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower has taken another huge step closer to reopening. On Wednesday, Governor Evers approved the \$500,000 requested by two area lawmakers to preserve the existing Tower.

State Sen. André Jacque and State Rep. Joel Kitchens said they were glad the Governor did not veto their Tower preservation initiative in the 2023-25 budget, which cleared the Legislature last week.

“The Tower carries historic significance as the first purpose-built recreational observation tower constructed in a Wisconsin State Park, State Forest, or State Recreational Area,” Sen. Jacque said. “I’m happy the Governor agreed with us and moved beyond his administration’s past efforts that would have essentially torn down this beloved and historic structure.”

“I am grateful the governor is listening to the people in our area,” Rep. Kitchens said. “Studies proved Potawatomi Tower is still repairable, but we should act fast. Let’s get it done.”

This is the second phase of the tower preservation project proposed by the legislators. Last March, in response to local pressure and a written request from Sen. Jacque and Rep. Kitchens, the Evers administration finally yielded to public opinion and agreed to an emergency stabilization project to preserve this treasured landmark for future generations. The Governor directed state officials to utilize the emergency repair funding under the State Building Commission the legislators pointed out was already available for that purpose, for projects with expedited

timelines up to a cost of up to \$500,000.

“It’s been a long road to change minds within the DNR and the Evers administration to hear pleas from local citizen groups and government officials to restore and stabilize the Tower before it succumbed to the elements and fell over,” Sen. Jacque said. “I’m glad the Governor finally got the message and switched course, so that the years of willful neglect do not destroy this vital piece of our area’s livelihood and heritage.”

“I am glad the Governor finally agreed and approved the funding to restore our beloved and historic Tower,” Rep. Kitchens said, “Our budget amendment reflects the will of area residents, local organizations, and resolutions issued by local governments to make the Tower safe for people to enjoy as soon as possible.”

Ninety-four percent of respondents sought to restore the historic Tower, according to a survey conducted earlier this year by the Sturgeon Bay Historical Society and Potawatomi Park Tower Alliance.

The Legislature included a Jacque-Kitchens amendment allocating an additional \$500,000 in the 2023-25 state budget to complete repairs on the existing Tower. Those funds still had to escape the Governor’s line-item veto authority to move the Tower preservation project forward.