

Sen. Jacque: State budget funds vital initiatives

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MADISON, WI... State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere) voted this evening for the 2023-'25 state budget, which contains a number of critical investments he previously introduced and championed in the Legislature.

“No budget is perfect,” Sen. Jacque said, “But by investing in Wisconsin’s workforce, public safety, water, roads and infrastructure, this plan is critically important for our communities, and I am pleased to play a major part in meeting those needs within this budget.”

Sen. Jacque worked to incorporate several initiatives ultimately adopted in the spending plan, including a dramatic increase in support for youth apprenticeship and career and technical education for high school students; a doubling of the law enforcement training reimbursement to local governments; directing the telephone bill surcharge that was originally intended to fund emergency public safety communications to finally be dedicated for that purpose; directing additional vehicle sales tax to the transportation fund for road repair; extending and fully funding the Wisconsin Fund Program for failing septic systems and protecting water quality; and approving key district infrastructure, including building the Southern Bridge for Brown County in De Pere, restoring the Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower, and replacing the Rock Island Historic Boathouse pier and break wall.

“I am pleased that the budget passed today accomplished these goals while spending and taxing less than what Gov. Evers proposed,” Sen. Jacque said.

Sen. Jacque highlighted the following initiatives:

Expanding Youth Workforce and Education Opportunities – Youth

Apprenticeships positively impact the quality of life for students, their families, and the community by preparing a skilled workforce for local businesses through the placement of 11th and 12th-grade students in meaningful, career-focused work. Students earn a competitive wage and can pursue a career pathway of their choice, and gain skills to overcome generational poverty.

Sen. Jacque's approved motion will create and support apprenticeship education opportunities for more students by providing an additional \$7 Million over the biennium to expand Local Youth Apprenticeship Grants, and an additional \$3 Million in Career and Technical Education Grants for postsecondary credentialing earned in high school. Governor Evers did not include additional funds in either category within his biennial budget request.

"In the 2022-23 school year, Northeast Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program students are estimated to earn nearly \$5.4 million," Sen. Jacque said. "That's a return on investment of \$5.67 for every \$1 in taxpayer money currently invested in this program, a solid return on investment in technical education and youth apprenticeship. Also, these students are more likely to stay in Wisconsin due to the relationship they have built with an employer."

Protecting Public Safety– Sen. Jacque has introduced legislation each of the past two sessions (2023 SB 209, 2021 SB 848) for mandate relief to double the state reimbursement to local government for the costs associated with law enforcement training. This additional funding was incorporated during JFC's final action on the budget. Similarly, Sen. Jacque has introduced legislation in various forms numerous times (most recently 2023 SJR 13) to eliminate the phony phone tax, intentionally mislabeled the 'Police Fire Protection Fee', that for more than a decade has been tacked on to our phone bills without supporting the original intended purpose first hijacked by Gov. Doyle and the 2009-'10 legislature. This budget properly renames the surcharge as the 911 Fund and uses its funding to provide ongoing grants to local government for implementing Next Generation 911 and fund Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and GIS upgrades.

"It is a fantastic feeling to finally see important reforms in support of public safety I've advocated for gain the support of my colleagues," Sen. Jacque said.

Building the Brown County Southern Bridge – The budget includes \$50 million for Brown County's Southern Bridge project located within and serving the 1st Senate District which will dramatically expand transportation access for residents

and businesses alike. Sen. Jacque previously secured the initial enumeration and funding commitment for this project, and was pleased to support further enumeration in the 2021-'23 budget to help speed construction of this critical public safety and economic development infrastructure.

“The Southern Bridge and Highway 41 lane expansion in Brown and Outagamie Counties are imperative infrastructure needs for our area, and I’m proud to continue playing a critical role to make them happen,” said Sen. Jacque.

The state budget must now clear the Assembly and be signed by the Governor to become law.