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Voters Looking For Bipartisan Solutions

By Rep. Gary Hebl

If the November elections tell us anything, it's that Wisconsinites are ready for a fresh start. They want bipartisan solutions to the issues we face today. While Republicans maintained their majorities in the Assembly and the Senate, Democrats flipped both the Governor's and Attorney General's offices. Wisconsin will have a divided government for a full session for the first time since 2007-08.

Over the last eight years, attempts by Democrats to make legislation friendlier for workers, the environment, and public education have constantly been met with a familiar chorus: that Republicans needed to pass legislation that would receive a signature from the governor. If Republicans were to accept changes by Democrats to bills, they would become less likely to receive a stamp of approval from Governor Walker.

With Tony Evers newly elected as Wisconsin's next governor, it is time to take another look at that way of thinking. Statewide races went unanimously for Democrats - it seems clear that Wisconsin is looking for a new direction. It is my hope that this will show Republicans in the State Assembly and State Senate that it is time to work across the aisle with Democrats to find solutions that will satisfy members of both parties and begin to move Wisconsin forward.

There are a multitude of issues facing Wisconsin today that are overdue for bipartisan fixes. One of the most promising issues is funding for education. With a lifelong educator set to take the Governor's office next year who has made it a priority to increase state funding for K-12 schools, I feel optimistic about where education could be heading in the next 4 years.

Another pressing issue is road funding. Democrats have been looking for years for a solution to fix crumbling infrastructure across the state, but have made no progress with the majority party. I am hopeful that we can now reach across party lines to find a solution that works for both sides and - most importantly - the people of Wisconsin.

There are other issues that we face in the coming biennium that I feel could have bipartisan solutions, such as affordable access for healthcare, fighting the opioid epidemic, and criminal justice reform. Common sense bipartisan solutions might be more difficult to find on some issues that have unfortunately, become highly politicized, such as gun safety, fighting climate change, or nonpartisan legislative redistricting. However, that doesn't mean that Democrats will ever stop fighting to improve the health and safety of Wisconsinites, protect Wisconsin's natural resources, and create fair districts.

I look forward to working with the new Governor in January, and remain hopeful that Assembly and Senate Republicans will be willing to work across the aisle to help tackle issues facing Wisconsin residents.

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