



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Local Legislators Announce Legislation Regarding Restitution and Misconduct in Office

Eau Claire – Representative Warren Petryk (R-Eleva) and Senator Kathy Bernier (R-Chippewa Falls) along with other local elected officials, announced legislation to fix state law following a felony theft that occurred in Eau Claire by a former County treasurer and his Deputy.

“The purpose of this bill is to help make sure that what happened to the taxpayers of Eau Claire County doesn’t happen in Wisconsin again,” said Representative Warren Petryk. “Though not retroactive, this legislation will help our area heal from that past unfortunate criminal breach of public trust and provide a reasonable degree of justice for the people of our State in the future.”

The legislation being announced is in direct response to a resolution passed by the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors requesting a change in state law. In 2015, the former Eau Claire County Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer were charged and found guilty of stealing more than \$625,000 from local taxpayers. The proposed legislation would allow a court judge to order the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) to withhold money (up to 25%) for restitution only if all three of the following conditions apply:

- 1) The crime for which the restitution is ordered is both theft and misconduct in public office;
- 2) The crime resulted in a loss to the defendant's employer and the defendant's employer participates in the WRS; and
- 3) The crime is a felony.

The proposed legislation was modeled on best practices from 25 other states that have laws allowing for court-ordered restitution from a state pension for cases of theft and misconduct in office.

“When this happened it really hit our community hard,” said Senator Bernier. “I hope that we can get bi-partisan support for this legislation to protect taxpayers in other communities by giving our judges and local district attorneys tools they need to make our taxpayers whole.”

“Many communities throughout the state have experienced this kind of misconduct. It is incredibly disappointing that there are some people given the public’s trust who take advantage of taxpayer dollars,” added Representative Pronschinske. “This is the first step in being able to get some money back for hardworking people and the real victims in these cases.”

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