



For Immediate Release
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What Does the Wisconsin State Legislature Do?

We Need Them to Deliver Results for Rural Wisconsin

YUBA, WISCONSIN: Since I announced my candidacy for State Assembly in the 49th District (covering all of Grant and portions of Richland, Lafayette and Iowa counties), several people have asked me, “What does a state legislator do?”

Some of us have read legislators’ articles in a newspaper, seen them tossing candy at a parade or even received a birthday card signed with their name. But of course, there is more.

Legislators don’t have a 1-page job description like many workers. Their duties come from the Wisconsin Constitution, which gives them authority to pass laws for Wisconsinites. In fact, each Wisconsin law begins with the phrase, “The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows . . .”

Good laws solve problems, whether they’re related to agriculture, education, employment, the environment or safety. Passing a law is always a group effort. A legislator cannot act on their own, rather they must get most legislators to agree to pass their law, and usually also the governor.

Wisconsin’s Constitution also gives legislators the authority to tax, and then spend the revenues. Our two highest state revenue sources are income taxes, which range between 4% and 8% (less if we make less, more if we make more) and sales tax, which is 5%. These sources plus other more minor ones generate about \$17 billion per year for Wisconsin.

Some of us receive tax credits if we’re doing certain things. One example is the \$100 million Earned Income Credit (reducing general tax revenues by 0.5%), which credits income taxes for low wage people who have a job. Another example is the \$200 million Manufacturing Tax Credit (reducing general tax revenues by 1%), which credits income taxes for wealthy people who invest in manufacturing plants.

After credits are figured in, legislators spend the \$17 billion we collectively pay. The top four categories are K-12 schools (35% or \$6 billion), health care assistance (18% or \$3 billion), UW-System/technical colleges (9% or \$1.5 billion) and prisons (6% or \$1 billion).

Wisconsin’s legislature is unique in that it is considered a full-time job. Only 10 states have full-time legislatures, which is defined by the National Conference of State Legislatures as working on average more than 32 hours per week, having a good salary and employing large staffs. In return, we should be expecting good results from our legislature. If you vote for me instead of the Republican majority, I will give you a better return on your investment. Here’s how:

First, I already understand the serious problems rural Wisconsin is experiencing with small farms, schools and towns. Farm numbers are falling (-20% in two decades), student enrollment is dropping (-7% since 2005) and population is decreasing (in most communities since 2010). I will advocate for solutions that direct our tax revenues to level the playing field for small and beginning farmers, give tax credits to young families who stay in or move into shrinking school districts and provide incentives to middle income people who invest in declining towns.

Second, I will hit the ground running because I already have experience making government work. I chair the Richland County Finance/Personnel and Rules committees and am working with colleagues to transition our county from a strong Committee form of government to an Administrator. At the same time, I am a fiscal conservative who has advocated for changes that more carefully allocate taxpayer dollars.

Over the next four months, you have a choice to consider between myself and Representative Tranel, a 10-year incumbent. On the one hand, consider our plan that focuses on increasing the number of small farms, students in our schools and small business activity. On the other hand, ask Representative Tranel for his plan, which has not yet been shared. In the meantime, examine his voting record, which has advocated for the continued concentration of farms, schools and multi-national corporations.

Like most of us, I'm ready for a change in politics. When I'm your Representative, I will partner with conservatives, moderates and progressives to get things done. I will respect various opinions, be transparent with my decisions and most importantly, make sure our state government is working harder to deliver results for rural Wisconsin.

If you have questions or feedback, I welcome you to call me at 608-462-3715. You can also email me at shaunforassembly@gmail.com, or visit my website at www.shaunferruralwisconsin.com.

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