



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

March 19, 2021

Senate Session Recap

Senate takes action on 35 bills, many for children and families

The Wisconsin State Senate was in session on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 and took action on 35 bills. Nearly all of the bills were passed with bi-partisan support.

I authored Senate Bill (SB) 79 which changes the law to count hours of teaching on the farm or in the field toward university teaching hours. In current law, UW Extension specialists who teach farmers outside of the traditional college setting are not able to count this time toward their teaching time on the university's accountability dashboard. This bill changes the law to count these hours.

I authored this bill at the request of Wisconsin agriculture groups who indicated that current law is a barrier for Extension Specialists to teach on the farm and in the field. The hours Extension Specialists spend teaching our farmers and conveying the most innovative farm practices to our growers should be tracked and recorded similarly to the in-person teaching established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty. This knowledge is invaluable to our \$104.8 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin.

I would rather they teach on the farm and make it count where it is needed, than arbitrarily limit them to a traditional classroom setting. The ideas, innovation and advice Extension Specialists provide to our farmers is essential to the health of our ag economy. I am optimistic this legislation will pass the Assembly and be signed by the Governor.

In addition to my bill, we also passed several bills that impact children and families. One of the most important is Ethan's law, SB 24. This legislation will ensure that children in protective care are not placed with someone, even a relative, who has a record of crimes against children, such as abuse.

Wisconsin needs to protect children and establish a clear standard for Child Protective Services (CPS) to avoid placing children with those with a record of child abuse that establishes substantial potential for serious harm. Ethan Hauschultz, 7 years old, was murdered by his great uncle, a known child abuser, with whom he had been placed in Manitowoc County.

The current system failed Ethan. CPS sent him, and two of his siblings, to live with his great uncle, Timothy Hauschultz, who ordered and covered up Ethan's murder, and frequently brutally disciplined other children under his "care". According to the bill's author, Hauschultz had a history of violence, including hitting a man with a tire iron in a bar fight, helping to beat another man to the point of requiring three days in intensive care in the hospital, armed robbery with a long-bladed butcher knife, and diving across a table at a restaurant to hold a steak knife to a man's throat. Somehow, none of these incidents disqualified him from taking placement of Ethan. Nor did a felony child abuse charge which Hauschultz pled no contest to.

If the protections of SB 24 had been in place to close the loophole, Ethan could not have been placed in Hauschultz's home – and presumably Ethan would still be alive. Unfortunately, placement of children with individuals with a background of committing child abuse is not entirely unusual.

We also passed several bills that address issues in child support, child custody and adult guardianship training. Most, if not all, of these bills were passed with bi-partisan support.

Finally, a bill I co-authored with Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) is now headed to Governor Tony Evers for signature. SB 28 was written at the request of Juneau County District Attorney Kenneth Hamm. The legislation aligns penalties for those who commit battery and are being held at Sand Ridge Secure Treatment facility in Mauston with patients who are officially committed. There was a loophole in the law that prevented the county from charging an individual who is being held before formal commitment with battery. Thus, a patient who attacks an officer, employee, visitor or other patient during pre-commitment could not be charged. This legislation changes the law to close this dangerous loophole.

Overall, it was a very productive week in your State Capitol. The vast majority of our work was bi-partisan and makes meaningful, necessary adjustments to state laws. Most of the ideas we worked on came directly from suggestions made by individuals in our communities. If you have any ideas for me to explore, please do not hesitate to contact me.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call (608) 266-0703 if you have any questions or need assistance with any state-related matters.