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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

May 7, 2021

### First Votes on the State Budget

The Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) took our first votes in the budget process. We returned to base budget which means that our next budget will begin with the current budget. This is the spending plan that Governor Tony Evers signed and supported two years ago.

From here, we will build the next state budget by adding to the current budget. We will focus on reasonable, responsible and realistic priorities to support all Wisconsinites. Our approach takes us back to basics as we build the next state budget.

Members of the JFC held four formal public hearings throughout the state. Each member also held listening sessions individually. We consistently receive input via emails, phone calls and letters. I am out-and-about as much as I can be, talking with the people I serve to understand their priorities.

Throughout these conversations, it is clear that the priorities for Wisconsinites are focused on the basics. You want us to fund roads, broadband, schools and healthcare. You want us to keep spending within reason. You want us to respect your tax dollars.

Our first votes remind Governor Evers that this is Wisconsin, not Washington. We're taking his bloated budget and right-sizing it to fit our Wisconsin values. This is not Biden's Budget. This is a Wisconsin budget.

In Wisconsin, we don't pass Bloated Budgets. We pass Balanced Budgets. We know how precious your tax dollars are and how hard you have worked for them. It's your money and we took meaningful actions to respect them.

The JFC took the following action:

- Removed 384 divisive policy items from the budget discussion.
- Returned our budget discussion to begin with a base budget. This is the budget that we passed, and the Governor supported and signed, less than two years ago.
- Adopted some re-estimates and required spending for several agencies so that we are starting with a very accurate picture of each agency's needs.
- Adopted some adjustments to "right-size" government operations and reduce bureaucracy.
- Finalized the budget for 16 agencies.

- Approved funding to construct a 50-bed expansion of the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center to relieve some pressure on Copper Lake and Lincoln Hills.

The net benefit of our actions is an addition \$434.6 million to the General Fund. If we stopped our work right now (which we won't), it would result in a \$2.5 billion surplus on June 30, 2023.

Wisconsin's fiscal condition is very good. Republican reforms over the last 10 years have put us in terrific shape. We entered the coronavirus pandemic with a booming economy and responsible state spending. Thankfully, we have weathered the storm very well and are in a great place to make reasonable, responsible and realistic decisions to build the next state budget.

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to [sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov) or call 608-266-0703.