



Josh Schoemann's Secure WI Agenda

Shrink Madison

The Big Picture

Nearly 50 years ago, Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus called Madison "30 square miles surrounded by reality." That certainly applies to the city's far-left politics. But it is also true of the economic fortunes of the state capital.

The latest budget approved by the legislature and the governor calls for spending \$111 billion over the course of the next two years -- a staggering 54 percent increase in spending from just 10 years ago. Money is sent to Madison by taxpayers from across the state and largely spent there, buoying the local Dane County economy with a steady, reliable stream of cash and jobs. The Capital Times editor Paul Fanlund has called this an "[economic cocoon](#)" and a "bubble of privilege."

It's time for that to change. To capitalize on the human and geographic resources of Wisconsin and make state government more affordable we need to think big:

Shrink Madison, invest in regional hubs so agencies are closer to the people they serve, and ensure that taxpayers' hard-earned dollars are spent across the state. The whole state shouldn't exist to serve the seat of state government. The government should serve the people.

Josh's Plan

1. Decentralize key state government agencies
2. Sell state office buildings in Madison
3. Require state employees to return to the office

More Information

1. Decentralize key state government agencies

The centralized, all-of-government-in-one-place model is a relic of a past time where transportation and communication were difficult. It's time to create a state government for the 21st century.

Moving agencies out of Madison will make the bureaucracy more responsive to the people they serve, save money, and improve the state's economic vitality in the process. Madison and its surrounding area have some of the lowest unemployment levels in the state, but the economy of the whole state should benefit from state government.

Final decisions on which agencies to relocate and to where will be subject to deliberation and negotiation with the state legislature, but possible relocation destinations include:

- Wausau -- Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Dells or Rhinelander -- Tourism
- La Crosse -- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Green Bay -- Department of Financial Institutions
- Kenosha/Racine Area -- Department of Workforce Development; Department of Children and Families
- Stevens Point -- Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Of note, office footprints in these communities that are needed to house state agencies are significantly less expensive (6 times cheaper or more) than in Madison.

2. Sell state office buildings in Madison

Continue and expand on the Evers' Administration's Vision 2030, with a particular focus on reducing the state government's footprint in and around the capital city. Madison is facing a significant housing shortage. Reducing state government's footprint will allow developers to address that shortage with high-density housing and mixed use projects on desirable real estate.

Selling properties not only takes maintenance expenses off the state's books, it adds to the local property tax base and should be a significant source of economic development for Dane County, offsetting the impact of jobs that are shifted to other regions of the state.

3. Require state employees to return to the office

The state legislature passed AB 39 earlier this year to require most state employees to return to in-person work. Governor Evers vetoed it. Governor Schoemann will sign it.

More and more employers are requiring a return to in-person work, and for good reason. Numerous studies have indicated that fully remote workers are significantly less productive than their in-person peers -- by as much as 18%. Taxpayers deserve a full-time state government, and no one is entitled to a job. Maximizing the economic impact of decentralizing state government requires employees showing up and working in-person, and patronizing local businesses. AB 39 is sensible legislation that delivers a fair deal for taxpayers.