



Dear Friend,

It was an honor to serve as a member of the Legislature's budget committee. I had the unique opportunity to have a front row seat for the budget process. It was a great learning experience, however I was deeply disappointed with the final product put forward. A budget is about priorities. And this budget undermined many of Wisconsin's longstanding priorities by defunding public education, the UW System, our transportation infrastructure and local roads, our parks and natural resources, and many other institutions Wisconsinites value. I worked hard to put forward amendments that would restore investments in these priorities, but these proposals were largely rejected.

### **K-12 Education**

Until recently, Wisconsin was known as a place where legislators from both sides of the aisle always made public education a top priority. It's a major reason why people choose to live here and raise their families. However, between 2011 and 2015, Wisconsin's public schools have been cut by \$1.3 billion in state aid. In addition, taxpayer funding for private schools has been increasing.

Despite universal calls to restore funding by school districts throughout Wisconsin, the 2015-17 budget does little to address the rising costs and challenges districts face in providing an equal opportunity education for ALL children. Perhaps even more alarmingly, taxpayer funding for private school voucher expansion will come directly from the Oshkosh Area School District's budget, rather than from separate state funding. Therefore, most schools will see an overall decrease, with Republicans holding flat funding for public schools next year and providing a small amount of increased funding in the second year. However, that increase becomes a decrease when the new voucher schools siphon the money away and when inflation is accounted for.

### **UW System**

Despite a budget that spends roughly \$2 billion more than the previous budget, the 2015-17 budget contains a \$250 million historic cut to Wisconsin's No. 1 job creation engine, the University of Wisconsin System. This will result in a \$7.4 million cut to the UW Oshkosh campus. While some have pointed to a chart showing UW Oshkosh gaining \$4.5 million in additional budget authority, the campus is actually using its own one-time fund balances that UWOC contributed to offset the cut and spread it over three years. In response to the cuts, UWOC has announced it will eliminate approximately 100 positions and look at academic and student support programs for potential reductions.

### **Natural Resources**

Outdoor recreation and environmental conservation have long been important to Wisconsin. Environmental and outdoor economic activity generates over \$1.4 billion in state and local tourism revenue alone. However, the 2015-17 budget threatens Wisconsin's natural resources in several areas.

- Removed all state funding for the State Park System and raised fees.
- Cut funding for programs designed to reduce farm runoff from contaminating our state's lakes, rivers and streams.
- Cuts to research science and educator positions in the Department of Natural Resources targeting the Science Services Bureau, which provided zero savings to the state's general fund.

### **Long-Term Care**

Despite the opposition of thousands of individuals and disability advocates, Republicans decided to dismantle Wisconsin's nationally recognized long-term care programs FamilyCare and IRIS. Their budget largely approves a plan to shift the delivery of long term care to large, for-profit insurers (with no constraints on their profit margins). There are few details on what the impact will be, creating more uncertainty for those with disabilities and the frail elderly.

### **Transportation**

Finally, after promising to find a sustainable revenue source to address the Transportation Fund shortfall, Republicans decided to cut funding rather than make responsible funding decisions for the

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long-term. This decision will delay important highway projects, costing the state jobs and impacting the mobility and safety of the traveling public. Even worse, this decision will end up costing taxpayers more to fix in the future.

Near Oshkosh, the U.S. Highways 441/10 project was targeted by Republicans. This project has been planned and lobbied for by local legislators, local government officials and local chamber for the last 20 years. Without further action from the JFC, this project will be delayed by at least two years. Prior to this budget, this project was projected to be completed in 2019, with these reductions in funding the completion date will be pushed to 2021 or beyond, a possible total of seven years or more of construction work on the 441/10 project.

In the Fox Valley, these additional projects will also be impacted:

- Highway 15 – Hortonville bypass – 2 year delay (2022)
- Highway 116 – Reconditioning from Hwy 91-21 Waukau to Omro (Removed from 6 year plan)
- Highway 10 – Resurfacing from Cty AP- Hwy114 (Removed from 6 year plan)

Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in the State Assembly. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



State Representative, 54th Assembly District



You can follow my work on the Joint Finance Committee by [liking the WI Joint Finance Committee Democrats Facebook Page](#).

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*This is an official government communication from Rep. Gordon Hintz. You are receiving this message because you have contacted my office and provided your email address. If you no longer wish to receive these emails, [click here to send me an email to unsubscribe](#).*