



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# ROBERT BROOKS

60<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



October 19, 2015

## Revenue Numbers

On Thursday, October 15, 2015, the Wisconsin Department of Administration released its annual report of Wisconsin's general fund. This report presents statements of fund condition and operations (budgetary basis) of the State of Wisconsin for the fiscal year that concluded on June 30, 2015.

Wisconsin's general fund, it was found, had an undesignated balance of \$135.6 million at the end of the 2014-2015 fiscal year. General purpose revenue taxes were \$14.541 billion compared to \$13.948 billion in the previous fiscal year, an increase of \$593 million or 4.3 percent. General purpose expenditures, excluding fund transfers, were \$15.334 billion. This is 271 million less than the budgeted expenditure allocation of \$15.605 billion.

**\$135.6 Million budget balance**

**REFORMS ARE WORKING**

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY  
**GOP**

Source: FY15 General Fund Balance, Annual Fiscal Report, Department of Administration

In fiscal year 2015, Wisconsin continued to devote the major share of state tax collections to assistance to local school districts, municipalities, and counties. Local assistance accounted for fifty-two percent of total general purpose revenue spending. Aid payments to individuals and organizations represented twenty-four percent of total general purpose revenue spending and state operations spending for all other state agencies accounted for seventeen percent of the total.

A copy of the complete report can be found [online](#)

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# Assembly session

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This week, the Wisconsin State Assembly will be convening to discuss legislation that seeks to reorganize the Government Accountability Board (GAB) and legislation to reform John Doe and campaign finance laws. My staff and I are still in the process of reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of these proposals. Upon listening to the debate and having my specific questions answered, I will determine whether or not to support these proposals.

## GAB Reform

[Assembly Bill 388](#) establishes two bipartisan commissions to replace the current GAB Board: the Ethics Commission and the Election Commission. Each will have six citizen members: two appointed by Republican legislative leaders, two by Democratic legislative leaders, and the final two are appointed by the governor from two separate lists submitted by each party and then confirmed by the senate. The gubernatorial appointees for the Election Commission must be current or former clerks, one from each party, to ensure that elections run smoothly and efficiently. The commissioners will serve five-year terms. Each commission will have an administrator, appointed by the commission members and confirmed by the senate, serving a four-year term.

The aforementioned legislation also includes measures to increase accountability and transparency. It, for example, introduces due process in the complaint and investigation processes. Additionally, when an opinion or guidance is rendered, these documents will be posted online for the public to review.



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John Doe Reform

[Assembly Bill 68](#) would reform Wisconsin's controversial John Doe law. At this writing, Wisconsin is the lone state with John Doe proceedings on the books; the nation's forty-nine other states employ grand jury proceedings in place of these investigations. The state's John Doe law is used to determine whether or not a crime has been committed as well as who is the perpetrator of the suspected crime. This legislation will ensure that a John Doe investigation will only be used when absolutely necessary. The necessity will be determined by state statute and the United States Constitution. The current John Doe law would be preserved for investigating certain felonies and potential crimes committed by on-duty law enforcement officials.

It is imperative to denote that this legislation would not legalize corrupt behavior. Political corruption is still illegal and will be prosecuted using a traditional grand jury or the standard criminal complaint procedure (as is done in the nation's other forty-nine states and by the federal government).

### **Campaign Finance Reform**

[Assembly Bill 387](#) would substantially rewrite Wisconsin law related to campaign finance. Chapter 11 of state statute (the chapter pertaining strictly to campaign finance law), has not undergone a major revision since it was penned in 1973. Since that time the courts have developed a clearer understanding of the government's ability to regulate speech. Unfortunately, Wisconsin's statutes have not been updated to reflect the boundaries of government's authority to regulate election-related speech. In the absence of legislative action, regulators have attempted to burden speech in ways that violate our Constitution. While the courts have protected our First Amendment rights, they have also made it clear that the legislature must act. Several of the core provisions are as follows:

- AB 387 imposes reporting and disclosure requirements on Independent Expenditure Committees or Super PACs. The courts have argued that these actors have the right to participate in the political process, but we are imposing reporting and disclosure requirements on their activity.
- Our proposal also imposes reporting requirements on one-time express advocacy made by other actors who may engage in the electoral process.
- Assembly Bill 387 regulates coordination of campaign activity, by codifying Government Accountability Board opinion and applying it to express advocacy.
- The number of campaign finance reports that candidate committees and outside groups are required to file, increases as a result of AB 387. This will allow us to better understand who is contributing to political campaigns. Candidates will be required to report six times during even years and quarterly during odd years. Large, late contributions to candidates must still be reported within forty-eight hours.
- Finally, this legislation encourages more money to go to accountable, transparent actors, by doubling the contribution limits that currently exist in Chapter 11 of state statutes. The cost of everything has increase since 1973, including the cost of running elections. Unfortunately, Wisconsin contribution limits have not kept pace with inflation, making campaigns more dependent upon unaccountable third party groups. Adjusted for inflation, our limits would be five times what they are under current law--this bill only doubles them. This proposal received bipartisan support last session.

## **Countywide Consolidation Legislation**

This week, I testified before the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs, on a bill I recently authored with Senator Stroebel and other members of the legislature who represent Ozaukee and Washington counties, encouraging counties to

merge health departments. The consolidation of countywide health services would save Wisconsin taxpayers more than \$300,000 annually.

In 2003, action was taken by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, encouraging counties and cities to form multi-jurisdictional health departments. Counties, for the most part did not follow through with this action, despite encouragement from the Department of Health Services, to do so.

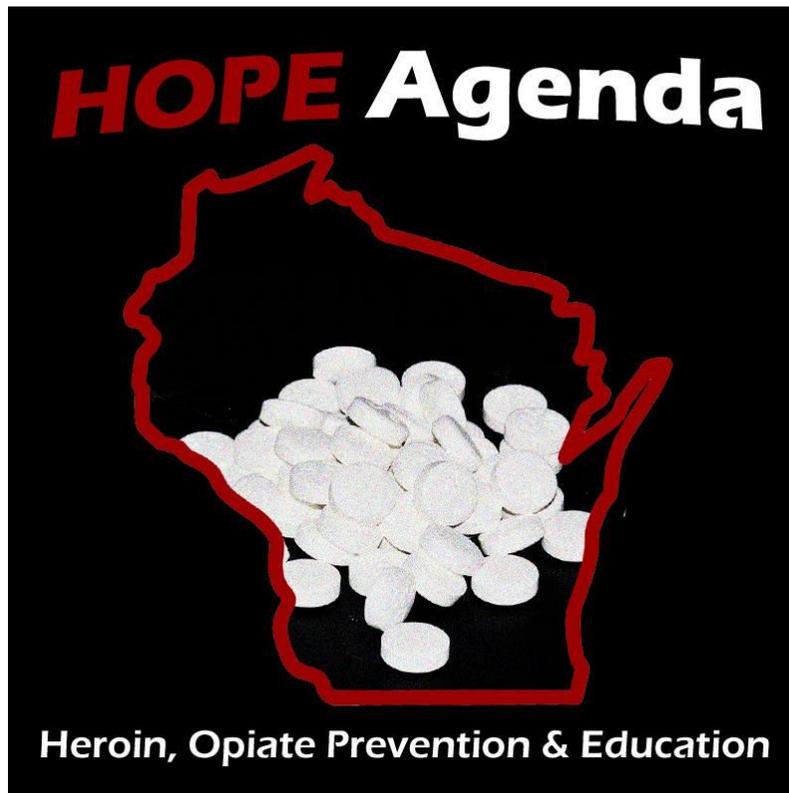
Consolidation of health services in Wisconsin has not been commonplace, largely because of the disparate economic impact that can often result from the equalized valuation funding requirement contained in s. 251.11 of the Wisconsin state statutes.

The legislation I authored, [AB 362](#), affords counties with greater flexibility in assessing county levy to finance a multiple county health department. This, in turn, allows each county to fund just its share of the cost of services, based on its population.



## **HOPE Agenda and Dose of Reality**

This session, Representative John Nygren (R-Marinette), co-chairman of the Joint Finance Committee, introduced four new bills as a continuation of his HOPE Agenda. Instead of focusing solely on heroin, these four bills target the root of Wisconsin's epidemic: prescription drug abuse and addiction. In the majority of cases, heroin addiction begins with an addiction to prescription medications. Whether these medications are obtained legally or not, we need to do our best to curtail the illegal use of these dangerous substances. I signed on as a cosponsor to all four HOPE Agenda bills.



The following are summaries of each of the HOPE bills being offered this session:

1. Change the requirement for those who dispense certain prescription drugs to submit information to the prescription drug monitoring program from seven to twenty-four hours. It will also require a practitioner to review a patient's record when initially prescribing monitored prescription drug.
2. When law enforcement encounters an inappropriate use of an infraction of the law concerning scheduled drugs, they may upload that information into the prescription drug monitoring program and have the PDMP notify the physician.

3. Give the Department of Health Services oversight over the operation of pain management clinics across the state. The department's oversight would not be regulatory, but would be a way of providing safeguards so "pill mills" do not become commonplace in Wisconsin.

4. Methadone is a drug assisted treatment run in methadone clinics around Wisconsin. It is not uncommon for a patient to regularly go for treatment at a methadone clinic for five to ten years. These clinics are for-profit and receive Medicaid reimbursement. This legislation will have methadone clinics gather data such as staffing ratios, the number of patients receiving behavioral health services with the medication, and average mileage an individual is traveling to come to a clinic. It will then be reported to DHS on an annual basis to give public health and treatment professionals a chance to analyze outcome data.



In addition to Representative Nygren's HOPE Agenda, Attorney General Brad Schimel introduced "Dose of Reality" which is an awareness campaign to alert Wisconsinites to the dangers of misusing opioid pain medications--an abuse that now exceeds deaths involving heroin and cocaine combined.

As part of the Dose of Reality campaign, The Department of Justice has announced Drug Take Back Day on October 17, 2015.

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## **This week in the 60th Assembly District**

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This week, I had the honor of participating in the Wisconsin Board of People With Developmental Disabilities' Take Your Legislator to Work Campaign. As part of this campaign, I was able to spend part of a Friday afternoon working at the Milwaukee Children's Hospital with Jennifer Rojas, a constituent from the 60th Assembly District. Thank you to everyone involved for making this an excellent event and allowing me to participate.

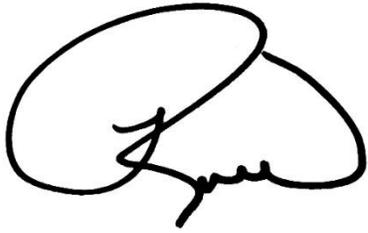


**Participating in the Take Your Legislator to Work Campaign**



**I had the opportunity to welcome students from the Belgium-Cedar Grove School District, to the State Capitol.**

Have a great week,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Brooks". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "R" and a cursive "B" and "S".

As always, if you have any comments or thoughts regarding the subject of this E-update, please feel free to contact me.

If you would like to be removed from future mailings, email me and ask to unsubscribe.

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