



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**ROBERT BROOKS**  
60<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



**November 17, 2015**

## **Investing in Wisconsin Schools**

Readers may remember that Assembly Republicans' top priority in the current biennial budget was K-12 education. During the budget process, we increased our investment in public education by more than \$200 million over the next two years. That included restoring \$150 per pupil funding in the first year of the biennium that was not part of the governor's budget request and increasing funding of \$100 per pupil (or \$250 per pupil total) in the second year. Additionally, Assembly Republicans increased several specific aid programs including high-cost transportation aid and sparsity aid for rural schools.

It is imperative to denote K-12 education is the largest expenditure in our general fund with more than \$10 billion going to local classrooms in biennium. In fact, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, K-12 education spending comprises more than thirty-two percent of Wisconsin's general fund budget. In comparison, parental choice program, which allow low-income parents to choose the best schools for their child, only receive 1.5 percent of general revenue dollars.

Categorical aids fund specific programs and the school levy tax credit helps reduce property tax bills. When one adds up the total amount of state support for local school districts, they will find that financial support is more than \$225 million. I am proud of the strong support that we give our schools because we must ensure that every child, no matter where they attend school, is receiving the best possible education. I also thought that this is important information that you, as a Wisconsin taxpayer, should be mindful of.



**Discussing local government issues with municipal leaders.**

### **Syrian refugees**

In light of the terrorist attacks in France and direct ties to at least one Syrian refugee, I joined my legislative colleagues in signing a [letter](#) to President Obama urging him to oppose the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Wisconsin, at this time.

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## **Assembly Session**

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### **Multi-jurisdictional health departments**

The past few weeks have been incredibly busy from a legislative standpoint, as I am currently working on eleven bills, ranging from transportation funding to the adverse possession of a public land. Additionally, I had my first piece of

legislation, SB 229 relating to the definition, regulation and oversight of columbaria, signed into law by Governor Scott Walker. In this section I provide a synopsis of three consequential legislative initiatives my office is currently working on.

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 multi-jurisdictional health departments with greater flexibility as it relates to funding their share of the cost of services, based on population.

Assembly Bill 362 encourages local units of government to consider consolidating health departments. At this writing, just one multi-jurisdictional county health department exists: Shawano-Menominee. AB 362 was passed unanimously, via voice vote by both houses of the legislature. An amended version will be voted on by the Wisconsin State Assembly, this week, and then messaged back to the senate in January. Washington and Ozaukee counties have estimated that the creation of a multi-jurisdictional health department would save them more than \$300,000 annually. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau found that there would be no fiscal impact to the state of Wisconsin, as a result of AB 362's implementation.

### **Adverse possession**

SB 314 is a bill I am coauthoring with Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) and Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green). Adverse possession is a legal doctrine by which an individual who occupies another individual's real property for a specified period of time may gain title to that property. The law, akin to many in Wisconsin, operates as a statute of limitation, meaning that until the statutory time elapses, a property owner may instigate initial action to remove an individual who is adversely possessing their property. According to Wisconsin Legislative Council, "After the time period expires, if the requirements for adverse possession have been satisfied, a property owner of record is barred from bringing an action to displace an adverse possessor. The adverse possessor may then bring an action to establish right of possession and obtain title to the property."

This legislation, SB 314, eliminates adverse possession of government property in Wisconsin. Under this bill, no property belonging to a state or municipal government, school district, sewage commission, or any other unit of government in Wisconsin, may be obtained by adverse possession. SB 314 is simple: it explicitly clarifies that adverse possession does not apply to publicly owned land. A person would no longer, if this bill is enacted into law, to acquire title to public land by adverse possession, thus saving taxpayers costly and unnecessary litigation.

As noted, this legislation has broad bipartisan support, with twenty-six cosponsors from both parties. Furthermore, it is supported by the League of Municipalities, Wisconsin Counties Association, Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association and the Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors.

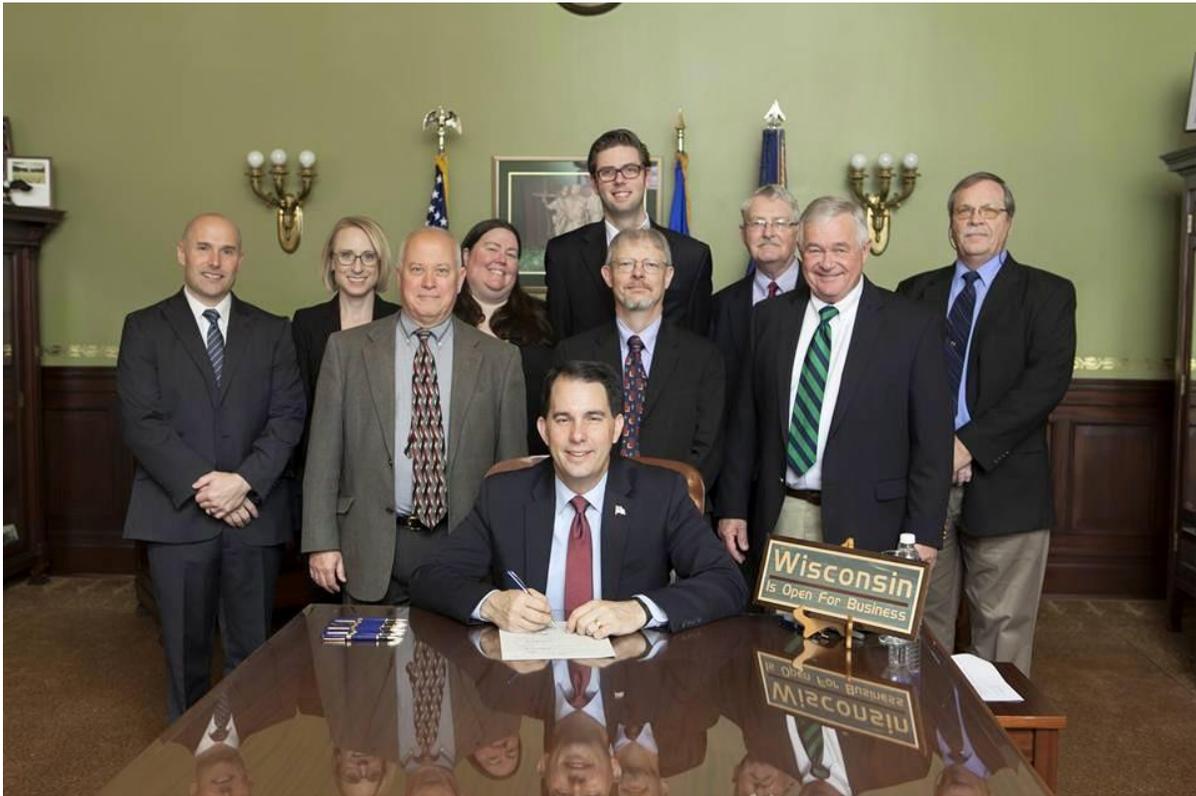
### **Transportation Funding Swap**

Senator Stroebel and I have authored LRB 3790, a bill requiring the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to "swap" federal moneys currently in appropriation accounts for specified state highway programs with state moneys. As

transportation needs increase, it is becoming increasingly important to identify efficiencies within the Department of Transportation budget. It is also imperative that the state ensure that local units of government are free from as many unnecessary regulatory and administrative burdens as possible.

LRB 3790 addresses the way in which transportation funding is identified and then allocated to local governments. Currently, the state receives transportation funding from the federal government and allocates those funds to state and local transportation projects. This bill would "swap" a portion of federal funds within local transportation programs with already existing state transportation dollars to unburden local governments from costly and unnecessary federal regulations and red-tape. Under this bill, no transportation programs (state or local) would experience any increase or decrease in state revenue.

By "swapping" federal dollars with state dollars, estimates on savings can range from ten percent to twenty-five percent. Applying this range of savings to the swap of \$45 million, local units of government could recognize between \$4.5 million and \$11.25 million in annual savings. These savings would be reapplied to additional projects, that represents \$4.5 million to \$11.25 million in additional transportation projects for local units of government.



**Governor Walker signing SB 229 relating to columbaria, into law.**



**Meeting with members of the media to discuss AB 362 relating to multi-jurisdictional health departments.**

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

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This week, I had the opportunity to participate in a local government panel discussion, with three of my colleagues, hosted by the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, to discuss issues of importance to local units of government.



**Participating in a local government panel with three of my colleagues**

In addition to speaking on the aforementioned local government panel hosted by the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, I had the opportunity to meet with Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Students from Concordia University in Mequon, to discuss legislation specific to their respective professions.



**Meeting with Occupational Therapy Students from Concordia University.**



**Meeting with Concordia University Physical Therapy Students.**

This past weekend I attended St. Marcus Lutheran's Call to Courage Gala, an event held to raise money for their New North campus extension. The event raised more than \$500,000 for the campus expansion.



At the Call to Courage Gala with my wife, Dawn, to support St. Marcus Lutheran School in the City of Milwaukee.

Have a great week,

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

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