



VAN ROY'S VIEWS

FROM THE STATE CAPITOL ...

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM THE 90TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE KARL VAN ROY

Your Calls to Legislators do Matter; Repeal of the Gas Tax Index is Proof **December 13, 2005**

Ever wonder whether a call to your state legislator really makes a difference? Well I want to tell you that your calls can and do make a difference - a big one. If you don't believe me, just ask one of the State Senators from the Milwaukee area. Last week, they were inundated with hundreds of calls and letters from constituents demanding a repeal of the annual increase in the gas tax. Although most of the legislators were hesitant about the repeal at first, they quickly changed their minds after receiving all those calls and letters from folks like you.

Many of you may not even be aware that the gas tax in Wisconsin, currently 29.9 cents a gallon, automatically goes up every April 1st with no debate and no vote. No legislator ever has to put their name on the line of supporting the tax increase, but taxes go up anyway. In recent weeks, a populist groundswell in the southeast part of the state has compared this automatic tax increase to, "Taxation without Representation." I think that's a fair comparison. Legislators ought to make a case to their constituents if they feel that a tax increase is necessary. They should vote one way or the other and be held accountable for it.

Last week, the bill to repeal the automatic gas tax increase (SB-331) passed by a vote of 20-13 in the Senate. This week, we'll have an opportunity in the Assembly to stand up for the taxpayers and repeal the automatic increase. Furthermore, the bill makes a significant change that prevents the governor from raiding the Transportation Fund for his special projects. The Transportation Fund is where all the revenue from the gas tax goes each year to be spent on road construction and highway repairs. Unfortunately, Governor Doyle has raided more than \$1.1 billion from the fund since taking office to pay for other state programs, making it increasingly difficult for the legislature to meet our commitments to our infrastructure. This legislation will prohibit future raids on that fund, protecting our roads while allowing the legislature to stop future increases in the tax.

This week I plan on voting in favor of Senate Bill 331 to repeal the automatic increase in the gas tax. This doesn't mean that I will be backing away from my commitments to improve Highway 41 and other roads in Brown County. It just means that we may have to find sources of funding other than ever increasing gas taxes. Once this legislation passes the Assembly, its fate will rest with Governor Doyle. I can't help but worry that the governor will veto this bill to protect tax increases to the Transportation Fund which he seems to be using as his own personal slush fund for other state spending. I hope that he will make the right choice for the taxpayer and sign this legislation into law.