



Chris Danou's Capitol Report
A New Year Brings New Opportunities

For the last five years, Wisconsin State Government has been under complete control by Republicans. That means the Governor's office, as well as both houses of the legislature have been run by Republicans and the majority party has been able to push through their legislative agenda without input from Democrats.

After five years of complete control, I hope this year brings collaboration between both parties in both houses of the legislature. Yes, the reality is that Republicans have the majority so they don't have to work with Democrats on the issues facing our community, region and state. However, just because they don't have to, doesn't mean they shouldn't work in a bipartisan effort. In fact, I think it would be in their best interest to include Democrats in the conversation and incorporate some of our ideas because it's become clear they don't have the solutions to move Wisconsin forward.

They've made decisions for five full years and yet Wisconsin hasn't recovered like so many other states. Each year we failed to keep up and ultimately have fallen behind other Midwestern states, including our western neighbor Minnesota. We know what we need to do in Wisconsin and we've known it for years, but yet the party in control was more interested in pushing through a partisan legislative agenda that would help our Governor talk to the Republican base while running for President versus one that would actually solve problems and improve our quality of life.

We know we need to improve how we fund public education, especially those in smaller communities so all of our children have the chance to learn and succeed, not just those in bigger or more affluent communities. We know we need to improve how we fund infrastructure projects so our roads and bridges are safe and reliable for the flow of commerce. We know we need to be responsible and protect our natural resources so we maintain our unique landscape and scenery. We know we must appropriately fund the UW-System and technical colleges so the next generation has access to the knowledge and skills that will help them obtain a job that provides family-supporting wages. We also know we must address inequities in health care so people are healthy and actively contributing to the workforce.

These are just a few of many things we know we need to work on and it's pretty clear our Governor and legislative Republicans don't have the answers. Yes, we have some great challenges ahead of us but those challenges also bring great opportunity for us to do good work and make improvements for the common good.

Like so many of you, I'm concerned about the direction of our state and while I certainly have my own criticisms of Republican leadership, I'm willing to find common ground and work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to address legislative issues. Currently, I'm working with Rep. Al Ott (R-Forest Junction) on hunting and fishing issues, and I'm glad we found common ground and are working together on these issues.

At the end of the day, we should work on things where we have common ground instead of finding areas of disagreement and focusing on those. We need to move Wisconsin forward and the only way to do that is to work together this year.

