Rep. Amy Loudenbeck

Guest Editorial

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As this legislative session comes to a close, I am proud of the meaningful work we have accomplished on behalf of the people of Wisconsin. More job-seekers are working, taxes are lower and our economic outlook is bright.

We passed a balanced budget and gave nearly $2 billion in tax relief back to the hardworking families and business owners of Wisconsin over the past 4 years. Property taxes on the median-valued home in Wisconsin will be lower in 2014 than they were in 2010.

As Chairperson of the Assembly Workforce Development Committee, I had the opportunity to advance policies to help workers and employers meet the demands of the modern workplace. We invested $178 million in worker training, including $35.4 million to support technical colleges with waiting lists for high demand fields, collaborative projects between schools and businesses and grants to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

We made targeted investments in technical colleges and K-12 education, and we made college more affordable by enacting a tuition freeze for the UW system.

I am pleased to report that 10 bills that I authored passed the legislature with broad bipartisan support. Once enacted, these bills will:

* Allow for the limited transfer of economic development tax credits between entities involved in a business recruitment or expansion project
* Reduce registration renewal fees for snowmobiles 35 years and older
* Improve access, accountability and efficiency for free health care clinics
* Provide additional services for vulnerable youth in foster care
* Create additional resources for children, youth and families in crisis who need shelter care services
* Eliminate six obsolete administrative rules
* Modernize one administrative rule
* Strengthen laws to protect human trafficking victims and more aggressively prosecute human trafficking crimes
* Authorize the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to request additional options for phosphorous dischargers to reduce impacts to our waterways
* Allow DNR to waive state levied landfill fees for voluntary environmental clean-ups

Legislators worked together to pass comprehensive legislation related to heroin addiction and mental health services. We also approved legislation to make life-saving cancer treatment more affordable by limiting the cost of oral chemotherapy and legalized the limited use of cannabidiol to treat children with seizure disorders.

We recognized the contributions of Wisconsin veterans by authorizing an expansion at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, eliminating the unfair exclusion of veterans from buying years of creditable service in the Wisconsin Retirement System and offering a veterans identifier on Wisconsin drivers licenses and state ID cards.

Job creation, workforce investment and a healthy tax and business climate are important to growing south-central Wisconsin’s economy. Taking care of children, families, veterans, the disabled, crime victims and the environment is important too. It is extremely gratifying to report on a legislative session that accomplished so much for so many people in Wisconsin and the 31st Assembly District.

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