



Rep. Kerkman and Rep. John Steinbrink testify in committee on Wisconsin Act 40

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**SAMANTHA KERKMAN** *Legislative Update*

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY  
66th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

SPRING 2012

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## Support for Job Growth

Development in the Pleasant Prairie business park can continue thanks to Wisconsin Act 40, which I co-authored and helped move quickly through the legislative process to become law.

Act 40 changes the calculation used for capping the value on Tax-Incremental Financing (TIF) District #2 in Pleasant Prairie. Instead of stifling development by using the 12% test, this TIF district is now limited to 1.33 times its base value.

Pleasant Prairie is now able to make additional improvements in the TIF to support expansion at the business park, and can take advantage of a \$3.5 million USDEA grant for the construction of a Bio-Medical Innovation Center.



Rep. Kerkman meets with Howard Skinner, Bob Tobey, and Arlyn Baumgarten, constituent lobbyists for the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs, in her Madison office

## REP. KERKMAN'S 2011-2012 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- **Creating Jobs and Stimulating Economic Growth**
- **Controlling Excessive Government Spending**
- **Making Health Care more Affordable**
- **Investing in our Children's Education and Future**
- **Providing Tax Relief to Seniors, Families, and Small Businesses**
- **Protecting and Honoring our Heroic Veterans**

## Helpful Resources

### The Samantha Kerkman Website

I encourage you to stop by new website [www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm66/news](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm66/news) to get valuable information about me and the goings-on in the Legislature.

### Capitol Insight

If you'd like to stay up-to-date on issues before the Legislature, you can sign up to get my regular e-update, the *Capitol Insight*. Just e-mail me at [Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov) and say you want the *Capitol Insight*.

### Informative Publications

My office in Madison is happy to help you in anyway we can. We offer a number of services and can provide you with a variety of informative publications. If you would like any of the following items, just e-mail me at [Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov) or call (888) 534-0066

- ✓ Wisconsin Summer Recreation Guide
- ✓ Wisconsin Official Travel Guide
- ✓ Wisconsin State Blue Book
- ✓ Wisconsin State Highway Map
- ✓ Arts and Craft Fair Directory

Please submit publication requests as soon as possible. Under state law, no materials may be sent after June 1st of an election year.

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State Representative

**Samantha J. Kerkman**

Dear Friends,

It has been a privilege to serve as your representative in the State Assembly for the past twelve years. You've given me the responsibility of being your voice in the Assembly, and I work hard every day both in Madison and here in our community to represent you with integrity and professionalism.

This session, my colleagues and I have focused on balancing our state's budget and managing the effects of the nationwide economic downturn. We've had to make some difficult cuts to programs and services, but I'm proud to say that we have succeeded in combating Wisconsin's deficit without raising taxes. Our reforms have saved thousands of jobs from being lost, while establishing a positive climate for new job creation in our state. Wisconsin is back on the right track for economic recovery and long-term fiscal stability.

Investigating and preventing fraud and waste in state spending has been one of my priorities this session. My work on the Governor's Commission on Waste, Fraud, and Abuse throughout the past year contributed to a significant report that the Governor and Legislature will use to ensure that state taxpayer dollars are used most efficiently and effectively as we move forward. The Commission identified more than \$400 million in potential savings to the state. As co-chair of the Joint Audit Committee, I have worked to direct the Legislative Audit Bureau to conduct audits of some of our state's largest public programs. Audits of Family Care and Medical Assistance were completed in 2011, and an audit of FoodShare is in progress. These important, but costly, public assistance programs are intended to help those in need, so it is crucial that the finite amount of taxpayer dollars that fund these programs are allocated to eligible participants, not those defrauding the system. The results of these audits give the legislature a clear picture of the state of these programs, where improvements can be made, and how to ensure their financial solvency into the future.

I've also committed myself to making Wisconsin a great place for children and families. I have participated on a committee, through the National Governors Association, to look at our foster care system and develop reforms to improve outcomes for adolescents. I've been a big supporter of adoption, introducing a joint resolution this past fall declaring November 2011 as Adoption Month in our state. Also, in response to numerous constituent contacts, I introduced Caylee's Law in the state Assembly. This bill, inspired by the infamous Casey Anthony trial, specifies penalties for failing to report a child missing.

Again, I'm proud to be your voice in the state Assembly. Please feel free to contact me at any time if I can be of assistance regarding state issues. I look forward to working together to keep Wisconsin on the right track.

Sincerely,

**Samantha J. Kerkman**  
State Representative  
66th Assembly District

## KEEP IN TOUCH

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## SAM'S COMMITTEES IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY

Joint Committee on Audit (Co-Chair)

Ways & Means (Chair)

Judiciary & Ethics

Financial Institutions





# REPRESENTATIVE SAMANTHA KERKMAN

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SPRING 2012

## LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Correction Helps Twin Lakes Taxpayers

Local officials contacted me this fall after spotting a \$70 million over-valuation error in Twin Lakes' equalized value as published by the Department of Revenue (DOR). Because the department does not have the authority to simply change a taxation district's equalized value after it's published, I quickly moved to introduce legislation to make sure Twin Lakes taxpayers would not see their property taxes increase as a result of the error.

AB 273 allowed the DOR to make a no-interest loan to the village and allowed the village to use the loan to offset the property taxes it would have otherwise had to raise to cover the error. Thanks to unanimous votes in both houses, AB 273 became Act 64 and effective before tax bills were prepared. Without the bill, property tax payers would have paid an average of \$200 more this year.

The error will be corrected by DOR with a corresponding under-valuation for the following year. The loan provided for by AB 273 prevents property taxes from fluctuating as a result of the valuation error and is paid back by the difference in the level property tax collected and the amount of the equalized value correction.



*Rep. Kerkman discusses legislation with Rep. Peter Barca on the Assembly floor*

## LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

### Suspicious Findings in FoodShare Program

A legislative priority of mine this session has been to investigate fraud within FoodShare, the state's program commonly referred to as food stamps. After speaking to many of you and reading numerous media reports of individuals defrauding the program, I requested an audit of FoodShare last year. The Legislative Audit Bureau recently released a report entitled, FoodShare Benefits Spent Outside Wisconsin. This report is a part of the large ongoing audit of the entire FoodShare program, which is still in progress. The initial findings confirm some of my suspicions about potential fraud in the program. For example, the Audit Bureau found 334 instances during fiscal year 2010-11 in which a FoodShare card was used in Wisconsin on the same day that the account number was manually entered to make a purchase in a state that does not border ours. The full results of the FoodShare audit will be available later this year, but in the meantime, the Department of Health Services is taking steps to investigate these suspicious cases.

### Reporting Missing Children

As a parent, it's hard to imagine that someone would choose not to report his or her missing child, especially when the missing child is as young as Caylee Anthony. After the Casey Anthony trial, legislators across the nation were urged to pass laws that would penalize the failure to report the death or disappearance of a child and provide an opportunity for prosecution that does not currently exist in most states.

I gathered colleagues from both houses to draft legislation and together, Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) and I finalized the key components and introduced companion bills in the Assembly and Senate. Known as "Caylee's Law," AB 397 and SB 299 create a requirement to report the disappearance of a child tailored to the child's age and provide penalties that mirror those already in place for child neglect. In addition, the bills require reporting the death of a child, prohibit hiding or burying (without authority) a child's corpse, and create penalties specifically for hiding or burying a corpse with the intent to collect benefits.

Caylee's Law passed overwhelmingly in both houses of the legislature, and at press time was awaiting the Governor's signature to become law.



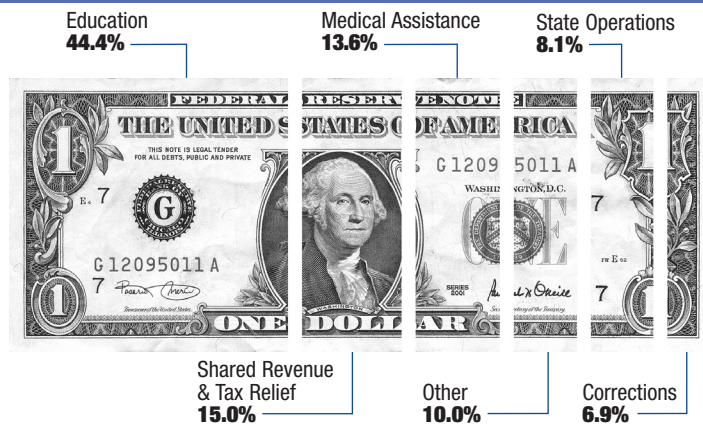
*Rep. Kerkman and legislative colleagues are inducted as members of Honorary Girl Scout Troop 1912 at a ceremony celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Girl Scouts of America*



*Rep. Kerkman at the Eagle Scout Ceremony of Shaun Maiter, surrounded by his family*

## 2011-2013 Budget

Here is a breakdown of how each state tax dollar was spent in the last fiscal year.



## State Hotline for Government Fraud and Waste

A 24-hour toll free hotline has been set-up for the public to report incidents of fraud, waste and mismanagement in state government. Callers' identities will remain confidential, but people are encouraged to be as specific as possible with the information they provide.

You can access the hotline at:

**1-877-FRAUD-17**  
— or —  
**1-877-372-8317**

## Adoption Day and Resolution

Foster care and adoption are policy areas I have been very active in supporting and improving here in our state. This session, I introduced a joint resolution declaring November 2011 as Adoption Month in Wisconsin. It was passed by both houses of the legislature. As part of Adoption Month locally, my husband, Judge Chad Kerkman, and I planned the first ever Adoption Day in Kenosha County. Seven families came together at the courthouse on a day in November and eight adoptions were finalized. Adoption Day was a positive and meaningful day for these children and families and we hope to continue this tradition in the coming years.



*Rep. Kerkman pictured with Jockey CEO Debra S. Waller, First Lady Tonette Walker, and Department of Children and Families Deputy Secretary Joan Hansen at the 2011 Governor's Outstanding Adoptive Parent Awards ceremony with one of the children*



*Rep. Kerkman works with Sen. Julie Lassa on the details of Caylee's Law*

## Rep. Kerkman's E-Newsletter Updates

Periodically, I send an e-mail newsletter to area residents to update them on legislative activities or other items of interest.

If you would like to sign up to receive my "Capitol Insight" by e-mail, please contact my office at [Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov), and we'll add you to our list.