



SENATOR CHRIS LARSON

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR - DISTRICT 7

Neighborhood News

Spring 2014

Dear Neighbor,

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to represent you and our neighbors in the Wisconsin State Senate! I am here to serve you, so please feel free to contact me with your opinions and concerns pertaining to our community and state government.

Our beloved state continues to face a number of challenges. This includes getting our neighbors back to work by creating jobs, restoring funding to our local K-12 schools which faced drastic cuts in the last two budgets, and increasing access to health care by accepting federal health care dollars. The current 2013-2014 Legislative Session is slated to end in April. These concerns can always be addressed in a special session if they are not remedied during the regular session.

I put together this newsletter to update you on my involvement in our community, some of the important things that happened this session, and how we can address the challenges facing our state. As always, I would like to hear your thoughts on these issues. I have opened a community office with dedicated staff to better directly serve you. Further, to hear the perspective of neighbors, I have held 41 town halls, hosted 13 coffee listening sessions, and offered 14 surveys and petitions.

If you would like updates on community and state news as well as neighborhood events, please visit www.SenatorChrisLarson.com and subscribe to my free, weekly newsletter, the Larson Report. For more information about me and to get real-time updates on issues affecting our community, follow me on Twitter @SenChrisLarson and connect with me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SenatorChrisLarson.

See You in the Neighborhood,

Chris Larson
State Senator, District 7



HOW TO CONTACT ME

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Job Creation Remains Top Priority

Community members made it clear that job creation must be the Legislature's primary focus. I have taken this challenge to heart by supporting a package of jobs bills. Adopting the *Middle-Class Jobs Now* package this session would be a positive step forward to create jobs for family, friends, neighbors, and businesses in our community and statewide. The bills in this proposal are listed below:

Wisconsin First Act (SB 42): Requires state agencies to maximize purchases from businesses that have at least 50% of their operations in Wisconsin.

Invest Locally to Grow Wisconsin Act (SB 43): Creates incentives for Wisconsinites and businesses to invest in Wisconsin community development finance institutions.

Workforce Growth Program (SB 44): Creates a Wisconsin Technical College System competitive grant program that invests in worker training programs.

Buy Wisconsin (SB 74): Encourages state/local governments to buy from Wisconsin businesses.

WISCAP Skills Enhancement Program (SB 25): Provides low-wage workers educational opportunities to gain needed skills for obtaining family-supporting jobs.

Made in America Act (SB 88): Requires state and project contractors to buy materials manufactured in the U.S.

While many other states are seeing improvement in their overall economic health, Wisconsin continues to lag behind. Our state saw only a 1% increase in private sector job growth from June 2012 to June 2013, while the nation averaged a 1.9% increase, nearly double Wisconsin's rate. As a result, Wisconsin ranks 37th among the 50 states in job creation. It is time to get our state back on top where it belongs. I will continue working towards this goal on behalf of our community.



Restoring Funding to Our Neighborhood Schools



Our children only have one shot at early education and developing the skills they need to succeed in a 21st century economy. Our state's future economic prosperity is also dictated by their educational successes or failures. Therefore, education was one of my top priorities this session.

To get a better picture of the educational opportunities available to the children in our communities, I made 36 classroom visits to local elementary, middle, and high schools. I also held town halls, coffees, and distributed surveys. Below are some of the reforms I championed this session to improve our children's educational opportunities based on suggestions from parents, students, educators, and community members:

- **Restore the \$1.6 billion cut from local public schools in recent budgets.** As our Minnesota neighbors proved earlier this year, it is possible to restore funds raided from education and still have a budget surplus. We simply have to prioritize our values correctly.
- **Adopt common sense accountability and transparency measures in the voucher program statewide to ensure our tax dollars are being spent wisely and as promised.** In Milwaukee County, we know expanding this unaccountable system can damage our children, property taxes, and communities. Policies I supported to address accountability and transparency concerns include: require teacher licensure by the Department of Public Instruction, conduct background checks on teachers and staff, employ special education teachers or therapists, and comply with open records laws.
- **Fix existing education system flaws.** This starts with adopting the "Agenda 2017" and "Fair Funding for Our Future" plans, which raise graduation rates, close gaps, increase career and college readiness, and fix funding flaws for greater equity between low- and high-poverty areas.

If Wisconsin is going to be a pro-business state, it must also be pro-education. We have common sense solutions in front of us and we should embrace them. I am optimistic we can work together to provide our children with a brighter future.

Insuring More Wisconsinites for Less Money is Common Sense

We know that access to affordable health care brings economic security for workers and economic opportunity to businesses. Therefore, I support strengthening our BadgerCare program by accepting federal funding.

This session, Wisconsin was given the option, under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), to use federal funds to fill coverage gaps by strengthening BadgerCare. In fact, the federal government offers states 100% of the funding to fill their coverage gaps for the first three years and at least 90% in subsequent years. On behalf of our community, I fought to accept this funding because paying less money to cover more Wisconsinites is both smart and the right thing to do. In February 2013, however, the decision was made to reject the ACA's recommended path to pursue implementation of the governor's plan.

According to the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, **strengthening BadgerCare would expand health care coverage to 85,000 more Wisconsinites, save taxpayers \$119 million over the biennium, and create over 10,000 Wisconsin jobs.** The governor's plan, on the other hand, will cause some Wisconsinites to lose BadgerCare coverage and

push them into an insurance market place that is not designed for their income level.

In December 2013, the Assembly and Senate passed special session legislation to delay the BadgerCare budget changes, such as cutting eligibility limits for the program. This special session legislation pitted Wisconsinites against each other. A vote for this plan would result in 83,000 childless adults who would have received health care coverage on January 1, 2014, being denied coverage until after March 31, 2014, while a "no" vote would kick off 74,000 parents and caretakers who currently have BadgerCare three months earlier than expected. Under this scenario, Wisconsinites lose either way. Ultimately, the bill passed and was signed by the governor.

Despite past legislative action, there is still a third option that remains available to Wisconsin that would ensure all these individuals could receive BadgerCare coverage at no additional cost to taxpayers. All that is required of Wisconsin to forge this new path is to accept federal funding to strengthen BadgerCare for our family, friends, and neighbors. It is not too late to move Wisconsin forward by adopting this fiscally responsible, compassionate solution to close the coverage gap.



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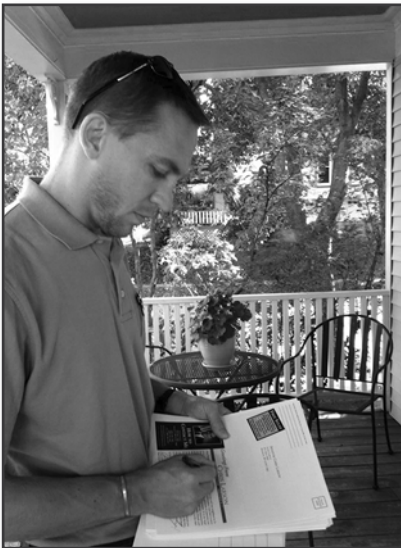
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Proposals by the People for the People

As your local legislator, my role is to listen to the thoughts and perspectives of our family, friends, and neighbors to pursue issues of the utmost importance to them. Below are a couple proposals I co-sponsored in response to ideas and requests put forth by fellow Wisconsinites.

Equal Paychecks Help Middle-Class Families (SB 143)

While the gender pay gap has narrowed somewhat since the 1970s, progress has recently stalled. According to the American Association of University Women, men working full-time in Wisconsin earned \$46,214 on average compared to women doing equal work, who earned just \$35,890 on average. This means that Wisconsin women earn \$10,000 less than men annually. As most Wisconsin women are primary or co-breadwinners, the fight for equal paychecks is not just a fight for women, but a fight for the health of Wisconsin's middle-class families.



Last session, the Legislature approved legislation to roll back equal protection laws for working women. To correct this mistake, my colleagues and I introduced Senate Bill 143, which would provide women greater access to equal pay for equal work.

Providing Wisconsinites Real Debt Relief (SB 376)

I recently featured a higher education affordability survey on my Web site. In total, 91% of respondents felt not enough was being done to make higher education affordable. In response to these concerns, my colleagues and I introduced the

Higher Ed, Lower Debt bill, legislation to provide real financial relief to Wisconsinites graduating with student loan debt.

The student debt crisis is very real in Wisconsin. The U.S. Federal Reserve System estimates there are 753,000 Wisconsin residents with federal student loan debt. These Wisconsinites end up paying an average of \$388 per month for about 18.7 years. Passing the **Higher Ed, Lower Debt** bill would do the following for Wisconsin student loan borrowers:

- Allow them to deduct loan payments from their income taxes, resulting in annual tax savings of as much as \$392
- Enable them to refinance loans at lower interest rates, putting potentially hundreds of dollars back in their pockets and our economy annually
- Provide them and their parents with detailed loan information and counseling
- Collect and track data about student loan debt to help policymakers and the public better understand Wisconsin's debt crisis

NEXT COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Hearing your concerns and priorities is important to me. Therefore, I will be holding listening sessions in the community to get feedback from you and our neighbors. Below are a few of the upcoming events that I invite you to attend. Hope to see you there!

Tuesday, April 22, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Bay View High School
2751 S. Lenox Street
Milwaukee, WI 53207

Thursday, April 24, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

St. Francis Library
4230 S. Nicholson Avenue
St. Francis, WI 53235

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Cudahy Library
3500 Library Avenue
Cudahy, WI 53110

Thursday, May 1, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

MATC, Oak Creek Campus
6665 S. Howell Avenue
Lecture Hall A
Oak Creek, WI 53154

Tuesday, May 6, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Gordon Park Pavilion
2828 N. Humboldt Blvd. (at Locust St.)
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

South Milwaukee Library
1907 10th Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Riverside High School
1615 E. Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53211

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

MILWAUKEE COUNTY

County Executive Chris Abele: (414) 278-4211
County Board of Supervisors: (414) 278-4222
County Sheriff David Clarke (non-emergency):
(414) 226-7070
County Government Fraud Hotline: (414) 933-7283

MILWAUKEE

Mayor Tom Barrett: (414) 286-2200
Common Council/City Clerk: (414) 286-2221
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 933-4444
Milwaukee Public Schools: (414) 475-8393
Dept. of Public Works Hotline: (414) 286-2489
Dept. of Neighborhood Services: (414) 286-2268
Parking in Milwaukee: (414) 286-8350
Legal Action of Milwaukee: (414) 278-7722

CUDAHY

Mayor John Hohenfeldt: (414) 769-2222
City Clerk/Treasurer: (414) 769-2204
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 769-2260

SOUTH MILWAUKEE

Mayor: (414) 768-8049
City Clerk: (414) 762-2222
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 768-8060

OAK CREEK

Mayor Steve Scaffidi: (414) 335-6330
City Clerk Catherine Roeske: (414) 768-6500
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 762-8200

ST. FRANCIS

Mayor CoryAnn St. Marie-Carls: (414) 481-2300
City Clerk Anne Uecker: (414) 481-2300
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 481-2232

FRANKLIN

Mayor: (414) 427-7529
City Clerk Sandra Wesolowski: (414) 425-7500
Police Department (non-emergency): (414) 425-2522

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Dept. of Health Services: (608) 266-1865
Dept. of Workforce Development: (608) 266-3131
Dept. of Veterans Affairs: (608) 266-1311
Dept. of Children & Families: (608) 267-3905
Dept. of Natural Resources: (608) 266-2621
Wisconsin No Call List: (866) 966-2255

FEDERAL

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin: (414) 297-4451
U.S. Senator Ron Johnson: (414) 276-7282
U.S. Representative Gwen Moore: (414) 297-1140
U.S. Representative Paul Ryan: (202) 225-3031

Promoting Accountability, Transparency Through Bipartisan Reform

Wisconsinites overwhelmingly support good government accountability and transparency measures. Such sunshine policies allow citizens to serve as watchdogs over their tax dollars. Unfortunately, this session we saw what happens when accountability and transparency are sacrificed in Wisconsin.

We need only look at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to see what happens when a government agency is given great authority over tax dollars, but lacks safeguard measures that should accompany this obligation. In the case of WEDC, hastily created by Governor Walker in 2011, we saw this public-private agency:

- Circumvent laws and our fair bidding process
- Lose track of over \$50 million in loans
- Provide awards to ineligible recipients for ineligible projects and amounts
- Fail to properly track agency credit card use resulting in purchases of iTunes gift cards, Badger tickets, and alcohol purchases with taxpayer dollars

As WEDC's problems are likely impeding much-needed job growth, I co-sponsored legislation to put our job creation agency on the right track. I will continue working towards this goal on behalf of Wisconsin taxpayers, like you. These common sense proposals would make the following reforms at WEDC:

- Describe each program, the overall cost, and how many companies will participate
- Establish clear program goals, including the number of jobs to be created and provide benchmark indicators of success
- Review each out-of-compliance contract, the action taken, and the justification
- Offer a comprehensive report on all jobs created since WEDC's creation

Unfortunately, none of these safeguards were put in place as of the printing of this newsletter.





State Senator Chris Larson

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With Compliments

Did you know that you can request the following printed materials from my office free of charge? Please check off the item(s) you would like to receive.

- ☐ State Highway Map
- ☐ Wisconsin Events Guide
- ☐ Veteran Resources Information

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Senate District 7 Neighbor Survey

① Our schools recently experienced some of the largest cuts to public education in Wisconsin's history. I _____ restoring the \$1.6 billion that was cut from local schools across the state.

- ☐ Oppose ☐ Support ☐ Unsure/No Opinion

② On several occasions Wisconsin has rejected federal health care funding to strengthen our BadgerCare program. I _____ accepting the federal funds provided through the Affordable Care Act that could expand coverage to 85,000 more Wisconsinites, create over 10,000 new jobs, and save taxpayers \$109 million over the next biennium.

- ☐ Oppose ☐ Support ☐ Unsure/No Opinion

③ I believe the accountability and transparency measures at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) are _____ to ensure that the agency is able to effectively create jobs statewide and improve Wisconsin's economy.

- ☐ Insufficient ☐ Sufficient ☐ Unsure/No Opinion

④ I support _____ of the initiatives that are part of the *Middle-Class Jobs Now* package, aimed at increasing job creation and economic development in Wisconsin.

- ☐ All ☐ None ☐ Some ☐ Unsure/No Opinion

⑤ Would you or someone you know benefit from passing the *Higher Ed, Lower Debt* bill in Wisconsin to allow for student loan refinancing and the deduction of student loan payments from their income taxes?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure/No Opinion



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Place postage and tape at the top.

Also available online at SenatorChrisLarson.com