



April 1, 2016

Bill Signings

This week, Governor Walker signed three bills that I authored into law.



On Monday, Governor Walker signed Assembly Bill 700 into law in Rothschild at Chase Outdoors. This bill changes the start date for the annual open season for hunting and trapping wolves from October 15th to the first Saturday in November, once they are removed from the federal endangered species list. Wolf pelts are of better quality later in the year and pushing back the start date may help reduce conflict between hunters.

I've mentioned it before, but I strongly believe the wolf should be removed from endangered species list so Wisconsin and other states can be allowed to manage them. Just last week, a pack of wolves killed 19 elk in Wyoming.



In Wisconsin, elk are being reintroduced. Last year the DNR released an inaugural herd in Jackson County and last week 39 elk were brought to Black River Falls. It would be very unfortunate if an event like the one in Wyoming would happen in Wisconsin.



On Wednesday, Governor Walker signed Assembly Bill 824 into law which made changes to sparsity aid that schools receive.

Sparsity aid was originally created in the 2007-09 budget as a way to help the state's rural school districts. Districts receive the aid, \$300 per member, if they have fewer than 725 students and less than 10 students per square mile. 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 (biennial budget) eliminated a third criteria requiring at least 20 percent eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. Many districts in Northern Wisconsin qualify for the program as school districts can cover vast areas with relatively few school age children.

Additional aid through the sparsity program is especially important in Northern Wisconsin. Unlike urban or suburban school districts, our rural school districts are unable to make use of economies of scale. Our students have to travel great distances to their school, while transportation costs have relaxed lately, this puts great pressure on school district transportation budgets.

Assembly Bill 824 lifts the cap from 725 students to 745 beginning in the 2016-17. In addition, if after the department has paid sparsity aid to currently eligible school districts and there is still a balance remaining, the department shall pay to each school district that received aid in the previous school year but does not qualify in the current year \$300 multiplied by the membership in the previous year. Rural school districts have come to rely on sparsity aid but a couple districts have memberships that have grown just above the current cap.

This bill was especially important for the Crivitz School District. Their reported enrollment would have left them four students over the original 725 cap. By passing this bill they will continue to be eligible for Sparsity Aid.



Governor Walker also signed Assembly Bill 704, that I coauthored with Representative Jeff Mursau. Published as 2015 Wisconsin Act 306, the bill allows a joint county and tribal library to participate in the state library system.

Menominee County maintained a public library located in Keshena through December 2012, at which point it transferred ownership to the College of Menominee Nation to provide improved library services to the Menominee Tribe and residents of Menominee County. However, state statutes governing the public library system did not allow this sort of partnership.

This legislation now allows a joint partnership between a tribal college and a county to participate in the public library system, provided the two entities enter an agreement to maintain a public library. The county-tribal library must establish a three-member library board that consists of one member from the tribal college, respective American Indian tribe or band, and the county board. The joint library would also be required to provide an annual report of expenditures to the public library board and make its library use free to county residents.

I want to thank Dr. Verna Fowler of the College of Menominee Nation, the Department of Public Instruction, Legislative Council, Menominee County, and Representative Mursau for the collaboration that resulted in this solution.

Wisconsin Public Service Commission Announces Next Round of Broadband Expansion Grants

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission has announced the next round of Broadband Expansion Grants. In the previous biennial budget, \$1.5 million was allocated for broadband grants. The Broadband Expansion Grant program provides reimbursement for equipment and construction expenses incurred to extend or improve broadband telecommunications service in underserved areas of the state. An application for a grant may be submitted by any of the following entities:

1. An organization operated for profit or not for profit, including a cooperative.

2. A telecommunications utility.
3. A city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility.

Grant applications are due no later than 4:00 pm on June 16, 2016.

New this grant cycle -- Grant Writing Workshops

The PSC and UW-Extension will sponsor a series of workshops around the state to provide information and answer questions regarding the Broadband grant program.

To register, please RSVP [here](#).

April 12, 2016

9:00 - 11:30 am

Eagle River Northwoods Center

115 S 3rd St.

Eagle River, WI

April 18, 2016

9:00 - 11:30 am

Suring Red Maple Golf Course

501 Golf Course Rd.

Suring, WI

May 4, 2016

10:00 - 11:30 am

Online Webinar: [Link](#)

WHA Visit

On Wednesday, the Wisconsin Hospital Association had their legislative day at the Capitol. Representative Mary Czaja and I had the opportunity to meet with several members of the association who made the trip down from the 12th Senate District.



It was a great opportunity to hear about several issues and challenges taking place in the healthcare industry - especially in rural Wisconsin. Our discussion touched on a wide variety of topics including telemedicine, the need of more mental health providers, issues with insurance and health coverage, and Medicaid.

I would like to thank everyone who made the trip down to Madison to share this information with me. It was a great meeting!

Performance Dashboard

A few weeks ago, Governor Scott Walker announced the launch of a new Agency Performance Dashboards website, which reports on each cabinet agency's performance in key areas identified by the agency. This new website is an important tool to improve the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of Wisconsin state government.

State agencies were asked to set aggressive goals with their performance measures and the website helps track the progress made on these goals. It also provides Wisconsin citizens with a user-friendly and transparent tool to measure the ongoing efforts to move Wisconsin forward.

Each cabinet agency were requested to develop an agency performance dashboard, which can now be viewed at <http://performance.wi.gov>. This new website will allow Wisconsinites and stakeholders to review the dashboards and engage in dialogue with state agencies about the measurements selected and the agency's performance on those measurements. Each measure includes current and previous data, graphics for quick reference, and a description of the data being measured.

The Agency Performance Dashboards website is a step in improving transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness in state government services. The website was built at no cost to the state or its constituents through a public-private partnership between the State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration, and Wisconsin Interactive Network, LLC, a subsidiary of NIC.

CDAC Meetings

Each county in Wisconsin has a County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) to provide input and recommendations to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on deer management within their county. Councils work with local department staff to schedule meetings, provide community outreach and an opportunity for public input, review population data and deer impacts on forests and agriculture, develop 3-year recommendations on county population objectives and create annual antlerless harvest quotas.

April meetings are coming up and I wanted to share the dates for those of you who may be interested:

Florence County - 4/18 – Florence Natural Resource Center 7-9 PM

Forest County - 4/20 – Forest County Court House 6:30-8:30 PM

Langlade County - 4/19 – Resource Center, Antigo 6-8 PM

Lincoln County - 4/19 – Lincoln County Sports Club 7-9 PM

Marathon County - 4/19 – Marathon County Parks and Rec Department, Wausau 7-9 PM

Marinette County - 4/20 – Crivitz Village Hall 7-9 PM

Oconto County – 4/19 – Gillett Library 7-9 PM

Vilas County – 4/21 – Conover Community Center 6:30-9:30 PM

More information can be found [here](#).

Calendar of Events

Upcoming Events

Start Date		Location
April 2	Phelps Maple Syrup Fest	Phelps
April 23	Hodag Hops and Vines Microbrew and Wine Tasting	Rhineland
April 28	Taste of the North	Minocqua
April 30	History Hunt	Merrill
May 7	Martinis in May	St. Germain
May 7	Colors of Cancer 5K	Crandon
May 7	Community Kolor Run	Merrill
May 13 - 15	Chamber Walleye Tournament	Presque Isle
May 28	Main Street Memories Motorcycle Show and Swap Meet	Tomahawk

May 29

[Main Street Memories Car Show](#)

Tomahawk

As always, if you have any comments or thoughts regarding the subjects of this e-update, please feel free to contact me.

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