



February 12, 2016

Legislative Week

It was a very busy week for me down in Madison as we get closer to wrapping up our legislative business. In fact, I sat on three committees, held an executive session in the committee I chair, and the Senate took to the floor to debate and pass several bills. I wanted to share with you some of the bills I voted on this week.

Monday

On Monday, I sat on the Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions, and Rural Issues. We heard testimony on several bills, but one that really stuck out to me was Senate Bill 631. This bill was authored by Senator Howard Marklein (R - Spring Green) and Representative Dave Craig (R - Big Bend). This bill makes several small adjustments to state statutes to help the charitable organizations, fundraisers, and professional employer organizations in our communities. The bill helps the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) streamline its agency as it regulates these groups, saving costs and maintaining the integrity of these important organizations in our local communities.

The bill also increases the threshold from \$5,000 to \$25,000 for which a charitable organization must register with DFI. It removes the requirement for a charitable organization to chase down a notary to notarize signatures on their annual financial report. The bill also increases from \$200,000 to \$300,000 the contribution threshold for an organization to be required to submit a certified financial statement to DFI. This was becoming increasingly burdensome for some smaller organizations required to have an audited financial statement prepared by a CPA.

Tuesday

On Tuesday, I started the day chairing the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry. It was an executive session where we voted on two pieces of legislation that I authored.

The first bill was Senate Bill 542 that I authored with Representative Al Ott (R - Forest Junction). This bill would move the annual start date for the wolf hunting and trapping season if the gray wolf is removed from the federal endangered species list. Currently, the wolf hunt start date is October 15 and this bill would change it to the first Saturday in November. By moving the date back, it will not only allow the wolf pelts to be of better quality, it will also reduce the potential conflict of bird dogs getting caught in traps. This bill passed unanimously.

The second bill we voted on was Senate Bill 605 which clarifies what types of flashlights can be used when hunting at night. Currently, hunters can shine raccoons, foxes, coyotes, or other unprotected animals at the point of kill. Under current law, however, the definition of what sort of lights could be used was limited to a handheld flashlight. This bill would allow hunters to also use a battery operated light designed to be affixed to clothing or a part of the body or mounted to a firearm. This bill also passed unanimously.

After our committee was over, the Senate convened in a regular session where we debated and voted on many bills

including the bill I authored to make changes to the MFL program. I've talked about this bill before, but I do want to emphasize the importance of the wood products industry to the state of Wisconsin. Behind agriculture, the forest products industry is the number two industry in Wisconsin. It's imperative that there is enough raw wood product to keep the industry going. The bill we passed makes several changes to the MFL program which provides a tax incentive to encourage forestry on private Wisconsin woodlands. The changes included sending about 80% of closed acreage payments back to towns and counties. As budgets tighten at the local level, we have seen local governments start to restrict weights on roads to lower maintenance costs. The revenue from this bill will keep additional roads from having weight restrictions. Additional changes include increasing the minimum acreage for enrollment from 10 to 20 acres, greater flexibility for owners when transferring ownership and splitting acreage, rule flexibility when a natural disaster strikes property enrolled in MFL, and lowering the administrative burden for enrollees by eliminating the severance and yield taxes. The bill passed with bipartisan support.

Another bill I want to highlight is Senate Bill 295 authored by Senator Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) which would modernize Wisconsin's voter registration process. First, it would allow eligible Wisconsin voters to register to vote online. This would be in addition to the processes that we already have in place, which means registering any time - including same day registration - in person at the clerk's office or by mail. I believe it makes sense to utilize 21st century technology to provide another tool to allow Wisconsin residents an easy way to register to vote. The bill also allows an individual to use a valid veterans ID card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as an acceptable form of photo ID. This bill will allow greater access to vote.

Wednesday

On Wednesday, I sat on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism. We heard testimony on five bills including a bill that would ensure combat sports like kickboxing would be regulated in a similar fashion that Mixed Martial Arts and boxing are. This bill was brought about by the tragic death of a young kickboxer who was fighting in an unregulated fight in Milwaukee just a few years ago. Another bill in committee would make some technical changes to the definition of "tourism entity" to ensure that our local chambers of commerce and other groups could continue doing their work to promote tourism.

The Joint Finance Committee also met on Wednesday. We heard bills on a wide variety of issues, including providing funding for grants to allow school districts to buy equipment related to technical education, helping school districts be able to participate in robotics competitions, as well as a bill to support the arts and creative economies. We also voted to approve a bill to increase the funding available for municipal and county recycling grant programs. Municipalities and counties use this money to help keep recyclable material out of state landfills.

Senate Scholar

This week, the Senate Sergeant's at Arms office hosted the 2016 Senate Scholar Program. Jason Jaworski from Wausaukee High School was selected to participate in the week long program representing district 12. Jason is currently a junior at Wausaukee High School where he is excelling academically in a demanding school schedule. His extensive involvement in extracurricular activities is representative of a committed and well-rounded community leader, which involves student council, forensics, jazz and pep band, Leo's Club, golf, and football. I was honored to get to meet Jason during his time in the building and provide an opportunity for him to experience government in action.



The Senate Scholar Program's rigorous curriculum is two-fold. First, the students are introduced to many facets of the legislative process. They got to meet with legislative support agencies, legislative staff, the Governor's staff, a Supreme Court justice, the media, lobbyists and University of Wisconsin-Madison faculty members. Then, students put their knowledge into action. When the Senate was on the floor on February 9, the Scholars staffed the session under the direction of the Senate Sergeant at the Arms office. The week's events culminate in a Senate Scholar committee hearing on a bill that the students have drafted. I want to congratulate Jason for being selected to participate in this program and I hope it was informative and fun! If you know a student who would be interested in applying for next year's program, please feel free to contact my office for more information.

Vilas County Chamber Dinner



I want to extend my thanks to Jimmy Dean, the Chef/Owner at the Guide's Inn located in Boulder Junction for hosting the banquet for the Vilas County Chamber on Thursday. The food was excellent including the wonderful bread pudding!

World's Largest Penny

Wisconsin Tourism Secretary, Stephanie Klett was on the radio last week discussing "Hidden Gems, Wisconsin's Hidden Attractions." The list includes the world's largest can of chili, the world's largest six pack and a festival named after the first satellite in space.

One of these "hidden gems" also include the World's Largest Penny in Woodruff!

You can hear the story behind the penny and other quirky stuff found throughout Wisconsin [here](#).

Calendar of Events

Upcoming Events

Start Date

February 12 - 13

Location

St. Germain

[St. Germain Radar Run](#)

February 13	<u>Manitowish Waters Sno-Skeeter Winterfest Rendezvous</u>	Manitowish Waters
February 13	<u>Northwoods Blizzard Blast</u>	Conover
February 13	<u>Great Northern Jerk-Off</u>	Conover
February 13	<u>Flannel Face Off</u>	Rhinelanders
February 13	<u>Ride with the Champs</u>	St. Germain
February 13	<u>St. Anthony School's Annual Ice Fishing Derby</u>	Oconto Falls
February 13	<u>White Lake Fishing Derby</u>	White Lake
February 13	<u>Winter Experience Ice Oval Racing</u>	Gleason
February 13	<u>Winterfest Rendezvous</u>	Manitowish Waters
February 13 - 14	<u>Lion's Club Fisheree & Winter Festival</u>	Rhinelanders
February 20	<u>Annual Post Lake Ice Fishing Jamboree</u>	Elcho
February 20	<u>Candlelight Ski/Hike</u>	Crivitz
February 20	<u>Frozen Tozen Winter Fest</u>	Boulder Junction
February 27	<u>Ho-Drags on Ice</u>	Rhinelanders
February 27	<u>Winter Party</u>	Presque Isle
February 27	<u>Love Me Tender in Merrill</u>	Merrill

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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