

Julie Lassa

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 24



December 4th, 2013

Legislative Update

Good Afternoon,

With the holiday season upon us I just wanted to give you a quick update on what is happening in the Capitol as well as around the 24th Senate District.

I hope you enjoy this holiday season and as always, please keep in touch. I value hearing your thoughts on state government and issues before the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Julie



Flex Option Helps Adults Complete College Degrees

-November 26th

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data from 2007, Wisconsin ranked 30th in the number of individuals over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or better. Along with our below-average national ranking, this often-noted "brain drain" puts our state at a competitive disadvantage with several of its neighbors. Illinois ranked 15th using the same data, and Minnesota ranked 11th. That's a big reason the average annual family income was almost \$4,500 more in Illinois and over \$5,000 more in Minnesota than in Wisconsin.

In today's economy, not all good-paying careers require a four-year college degree, nor does a degree guarantee employment. But studies have shown consistently that individuals with college degrees tend to earn substantially more over the course of their careers. Along with that, businesses looking to start companies in some of the fastest growing fields, such as IT and biotechnology, need engineers and others with four-year and graduate degrees, and will locate where they



(Senator Lassa speaking at the Military Service Ceremony on November 29th in Tomah)

Time to Stop Playing Politics with Health Care

-December 3rd

On December 19, the Wisconsin Senate will come into special session to take up bills that would delay most of Governor Walker's changes to BadgerCare and the state's Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan (HIRSP) that were made in the state budget. The bulk of these changes were to force people out of these health insurance programs and cause them to buy coverage from the health care exchange established by the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). Governor Walker said the delays were necessary because of the rocky rollout of the federal Healthcare.gov website.

It is absolutely true that the federal website should have performed better than it did; however, many of the problems with it have since been fixed or are being fixed now. But what the Governor doesn't say is that Wisconsinites had to depend on the federal site because he chose not to set up a Wisconsin-based health care exchange, as many other states have done. In fact, many of the difficulties people in Wisconsin face with health coverage don't result from Obamacare, but from the Governor's insistence on playing political games with its implementation.

are plentiful. And some careers that once didn't require four-year degrees, such as nursing, soon will.

Fortunately, Wisconsin has a ready source of potential college graduates: the one-in-five adults who have completed some college but did not finish a degree program. However, many of these individuals have already entered the workforce, and have job, family or other commitments that may make it difficult to attend traditional college courses. Alternative education opportunities, such as online distance learning, are increasingly available, but up until now it has been challenging to earn a college degree this way.

That's where the new University of Wisconsin Flexible Option program comes in. Flex Option, which began accepting registrations on November 21, aims to open the door for more people to have access to higher education. Beginning in January, 2014, students will be able to complete bachelor's degrees in Nursing and Biomedical Sciences Diagnostic Imagery, earn a bachelor's in Information Science and Technology, an Associate of Arts and Sciences degree, or a certificate in Business and Technical Communication.

Along with online content delivery, what makes Flex Option unique is its competency assessments that gives students credit for what they have learned in their careers. Rather than taking a set number of courses, Flex Option students master "competency sets" to earn degrees, which means that any competencies they've already gained will help them finish their degrees faster.

Flex Option is for nontraditional students who want their previous schooling, work skills, and prior knowledge to apply toward degrees or certificates. The competency-based and self-paced format of courses and assessments help students balance work, family and other responsibilities with educational goals. And because most Flex Option material is delivered online, students have the opportunity to fit their degree work into just about any schedule.

The cost of a Flex Option degree will vary based on how much students already know and what pace they choose to work at. But

Along with refusing to set up a state exchange, the Governor chose to reject federal funding for the expansion of Medicaid. And the administration has not taken advantage of the ACA's provisions that allow the state to prevent insurance companies from increasing rates. The result is that fewer Wisconsinites are being covered and those who are will be paying much higher rates.



Our neighbors in Minnesota went in the exact opposite direction, and chose to implement the ACA the way it was designed. As a result, health care premiums in Minnesota are between 25 and 35 percent lower than in Wisconsin, despite the fact that per capita health care costs are basically the same in both states. Thousands of Minnesotans have enrolled in coverage through their state-run exchange, as compared with only a few hundred in Wisconsin using the federal website.

While individuals in Minnesota's high-risk pool will be able to keep their current coverage for another year, Wisconsinites in HIRSP are faced with the uncertainty of not knowing whether that program will be extended, even as the December 23rd deadline for enrolling in an exchange plan looms. And while Minnesota is expanding Medicaid coverage, Wisconsin is preparing to drop 77,000 people off of BadgerCare and onto the private market.

This doesn't hurt only the low-income working families who will now struggle with higher health insurance costs. As a Rand Corporation study showed, our state's failure to expand Medicaid is one of the factors

tuition is set at flat rates that could represent a substantial savings over the cost of a traditional four-year degree. State and federal financial aid programs are also available for Flex Option. And those who complete the program will earn a degree from a recognized University of Wisconsin institution.

Flex Option is an innovative approach to increase the number of college graduates in Wisconsin, close the skills gaps that have left so many open positions unfilled, and to help working adults advance their education and careers. To learn more about University of Wisconsin Flexible Option and take a self-assessment to see if it's right for you, go to <http://flex.wisconsin.edu>.

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On the Web:

[Senator Lassa's Website](#)

The 24th Senate District:

[District Information](#)

Pending Legislation

[Purchasing preference for Wisconsin-based](#)

driving premium costs up for all of us by an estimated 8 to 10 percent. And \$4.38 billion in federal spending that could be creating jobs and strengthening Wisconsin's economy will go somewhere else instead, increasing our status as a tax donor state.

This situation wasn't caused by Obamacare. It was created by a governor and a Republican majority in the Legislature whose ideological approach to health care made preventing the implementation of ACA more important than making sure people got coverage.

The problems with the federal website are being repaired, but Wisconsin's health care coverage problems will be long lasting until our state government stops playing politics with the Affordable Care Act and starts taking the steps other states have taken to make affordable health care available to more of our citizens.

Recent Press Releases from Senator Lassa

Lassa: Certified Site Program Shows Central Wisconsin is a Prime Business Location

-November 26th

Madison – Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) issued the following statement today after the announcement of the selection of Rapid East Commerce Center in Wisconsin Rapids as a “Certified In Wisconsin” development-ready site by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

“The selection of the Rapid East Commerce Center as a WEDC development-ready site will help market Wisconsin Rapids to businesses throughout the state, across the nation and around the world as a great place to locate. This certification will let business site selectors know that key approvals, documentations and assessments required for industrial uses are already in place to help

<u>Senate Bill 42</u>	businesses revision re out-of-state vendors that have or will have 50% of their operations in Wisconsin
<u>Senate Bill 43</u>	Creates a tax credit for investments in community development financial institutions
<u>Senate Bill 44</u>	Distributing \$10 million in workforce growth grants to technical college districts to train workers in high-demand skills
<u>Senate Bill 101</u>	Revenue limit increased for school districts that develop a school safety plan with local law enforcement agency
<u>Senate Bill 104</u>	Requiring congenital heart defect screening in newborns and granting rule-making authority
<u>Senate Bill 225</u>	Allow victims of sexual abuse who are currently barred from bringing a suit against their perpetrator a two year window to take their abuser to court
<u>Senate Bill 260</u>	Allows for taxpayers who claim early stage seed and angel investment income and franchise tax credits to receive a tax refund if the credit amount exceeds the taxpayer's tax liability
<u>Senate Bill 273</u>	Requires Department of Workforce Development (DWD) staff to be available to answer employees' questions when they are denied benefits and to give them information about resources available to help navigate the appellate process
<u>Senate Bill 386</u>	Creates annual open enrollment periods for Medicare supplement policies
<u>Senate Bill 396</u>	Lindsey's Law removes the one year deadline for victims of sexual assault crimes to apply for counseling and mental health treatment through the Crime Victims Fund
<u>LRB 2699</u>	Expands the veterans home task force to include the Council of Veterans Programs
<u>LRB 2700</u>	Returning the requirement that veterans homes admit veterans suffering from psychosis and drug and alcohol addictions

Capitol Calendar



November 2013

**Click on committee meeting titles in the right-side column for their agendas*

businesses thrive and grow here.

“It’s great to note that two of the first 13 sites to be certified are here in Central Wisconsin. Rapid East Commerce Center joins the East Park Commerce Center in Stevens Point in the Certified Sites program. I think this shows not only what a prime location Central Wisconsin offers businesses, but also the planning and preparation our civic leaders have done to promote job growth here. It’s one of the many ways this area has positioned itself to develop a strong, diverse economy, both now and in the future.”

24th Senate District Affordable Care Act Updates

The Marketplace on a Local Level

The list of local agencies will continually be updated. For now, you can contact the Regional Enrollment Network (REN) or Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) nearest to you. Your local library and pharmacy chains, such as CVS and Walgreens Pharmacies, may also be able to educate you on the Marketplace. [You can also use this link to help find a local Marketplace navigator near you.](#) Here is a list of RENs and FQHCs in and around the 24th Senate District:

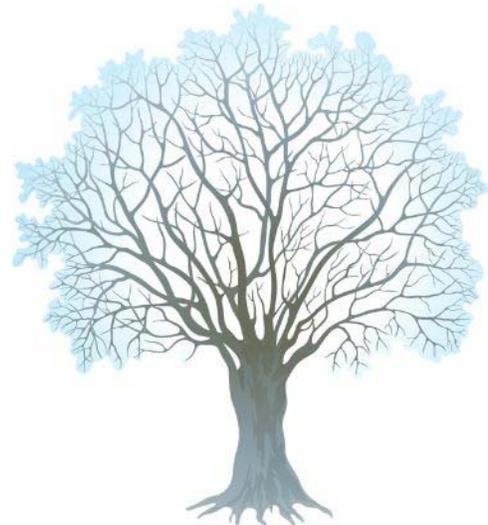
- Bridge Community Health Clinic (Wausau): 715-848-4884
- Capital REN (Adams County): 888-794-5556
- Central REN (Portage County): 888-445-1621
- East Central REN (Waushara County): 888-256-4563
- Family Health Center (Marshfield): 800-942-5420
- Family Health/La Clinica (Wautoma): 920-787-5514

December 4, 2013	Assembly Special Session Floor Period
December 12, 2013	Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice Executive Session
December 12, 2013	Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice Public Hearing
December 17, 2013	Assembly Speaker’s Taskforce on Rural Schools Public Hearing
December 19, 2013	Senate Special Session Floor Period

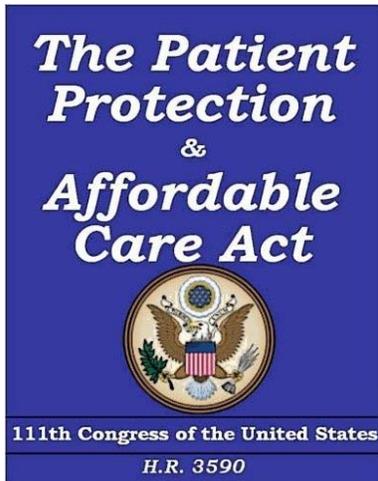
Helpful Links

- [Resident hunting, fishing and other recreational licenses](#) - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- [North Central Travel Information Map](#) - Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- [Top 10 Wisconsin Consumer Complaints](#) - Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- [BadgerCare+ Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Information](#) - Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- [Health Insurance Marketplace](#) - U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid
- [National No Call List Registration](#) - Federal Trade Commission

District Corner



- Mauston Dental Center
(Mauston): 800-942-5330
- Northern REN
(Wood County): 888-794-5722
- Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center
(Cashton): 608-654-5100
- Western REN
(Jackson and Monroe Counties):
888-627-0430



24th Senate District Consumer Protection Updates

Simple Steps for Safe Cyber Shopping

-Released November 26

MADISON – Cyber Monday is less than a week away, and the expected surge in online shopping traffic is likely to draw cybercriminals out of the woodwork. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) asks consumers to protect their wallets by taking some simple safety precautions when shopping online throughout the holiday season.

“Cyberthieves know what the hot gift items are this year, and they target their scams accordingly,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. “These crooks post fake contests

Sunday, Dec 1 st – Friday, Dec 13 th	Food and Warm Clothing Drive	Sparta Dental Center
Wednesday, Dec 4 th 3:00pm-6:00pm	Burnstad's Market Holiday Showcase	Burnstad's Market, Tomah, WI
Thursday, Dec 5 th	Fort McCoy Annual Tree Lighting	Fort McCoy
Thursday, Dec 5 th 5:00pm-7:00pm	Faith in Action Annual Christmas Fundraiser	First United Methodist Church, 1105 Butts Ave Tomah, WI
Thursday, Dec 5 th 5:30pm-8:30pm	Jingle Mingle	American Legion, Sparta, WI
Thursday, Dec 5 th 7:00pm-8:00pm	Canadian Pacific Holiday Train	South Water Street & Milwaukee Street, Sparta WI
Friday, Dec 6 th – Sunday, 8 th 5:00pm-8:00pm	Enchanted Forest	Rosholt Fair Park
Fridays and Saturdays, Dec 6 th – Dec 31 st 5:00pm-9:00pm	Holiday Lights in the Park	Evans Bosshard Park, Sparta, WI
Friday, Dec 6 th 6:00pm-8:00pm	Children's Holiday Parade	North Water Street, Downtown Sparta
Friday, Dec 6 th 6:00pm-8:00pm	The Chair Affair	The Point, 1108 Superior Ave Tomah, WI
Saturday, Dec 7 th	Pictures with Santa	Central WI Children's Museum
Saturday, Dec 7 th	Nekoosa Area Hometown Christmas 2013	Nekoosa Area
Saturday, Dec 7 th 8:00am-11:00am	Tomah Lioness Breakfast with Santa	Knights of Columbus Hall 202, Juneau St, Tomah, WI
Saturday, Dec 7 th 8:30am-1:00pm	Tomah Memorial Auxiliary Christmas Bazaar	Tomah Memorial Hospital
Saturday, Dec 7 th 9:00am-4:00pm	South Wood County Humane Society's Christmas Bazaar	Steve's Rental & Service Building 940 Huntington Ave, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
		Registration at Goodfellas

on social media sites, publish dangerous links, and send texts and emails to get shoppers to reveal personal information or download malicious software onto their devices.”

Even when you're shopping with a well-known online retailer, carefully check return policies and restocking fees and find out who is responsible for any return shipping costs before submitting your order.

“Before you check out, know exactly what items you are purchasing, when the items should be delivered and who to contact if they do not arrive when expected.” Chalmers said. “If that information is not clearly stated on the website, consider shopping elsewhere.”



DATCP provides the following tips to help keep your online shopping experience safe:

- Make sure a website is legitimate before ordering. Check for the company's name, physical location and contact information. Beware of deals that seem too good to be true, particularly from websites with which you are not familiar. ID thieves can create websites that mimic a legitimate company's site. Do not trust a site based solely on its appearance.
- If you find an item you want to purchase, make sure you are using a secure site before you enter any personal or banking information – secure sites start with “https” rather than “http” (the added “s” stands for “secure”).
- To help protect your home connection from identity thieves and hackers, update your device's operating system and anti-virus software and install a firewall in your online setup before you even start your web

Saturday, Dec 7 th 9:00am	Reindeer Run 5k Run/Walk 2013	Basement, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Saturday, Dec 7 th 9:00am-5:00pm	Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center's Holiday Open House	Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center
Saturday, Dec 7 th 9:00am-4:00pm	Christmas Bazaar	Steve's Rental & Service 940 Huntington Ave, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Saturday, December 7 th 9:00am-4:00pm	10 th Annual Holiday Home Party Extravaganza	Park Ridge Family Restaurant Banquet Hall
Saturday, December 7 th 9:00am-12:00pm	Pancake Breakfast with Santa	UW Stevens Point, Laird Room, 1015 Reserve Street
Saturday, Dec 7 th 9:30am-3:00pm	Christmas at the Ridges	Ridges Golf Course & Supper Club, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Saturday, Dec 7 th 10:00am	Mayor's Favorite Christmas Cookie	Water Street Cafe, Sparta, WI
Saturday, December 7 th – Sunday 8 th 10:00am-5:00pm	Amherst Village Christmas	Main St, Amherst, WI
Saturday, December 7 th – Monday 9 th 10:00am-6:00pm	Joan North Designs 10 th Annual Holiday Show	Scarabocchio Art Museum 800 Main St Stevens Point, WI
Saturday, December 7 th 4:00pm-7:00pm	Frostbite Road Race	Stevens Point YMCA, 1000 Division Street
Saturday, Dec 7 th 5:15pm-8:00pm	Nekoosa Area Hometown Christmas Parade	Parade starts at Good Fellas and ends at Nekoosa Library
Sunday, Dec 8 th 11:30am-2:00pm	Sentry Insurance Holiday Fun for Everyone, Kids and Santa Party	Stevens Point YMCA, 1000 Division Street
Sunday, Dec 8 th 1:30pm-3:20pm	Skating with Santa	KB Willett Arena 1000 MN Ave Stevens Point, WI
Tuesday, Dec 10 th 10:45am-1:30pm	Working Women's Luncheon	Lake Aire Supper Club Wisconsin Rapids, WI

shopping.

- Pay by credit card for extra protection. Consumers have the right to dispute charges if they find errors in their credit statement and report them to the credit card company within 60 days of receiving the statement.
- Keep a paper trail. Print or save records of online transactions, item descriptions and copies of emails sent between you and the seller. Carefully review credit card statements after the holidays to look for unauthorized charges.

For additional information or to file a consumer complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

Did You Know?

You can get the following items free from my office:*

- [Foldable State Highway Map](#)
- 2013 Wisconsin Arts & Crafts Fair Directory
- 2013 Spring/Summer Event Guide
- [24th Senate District Business Help Directory](#)
- [Wisconsin Veterans Benefits Guide](#)



If you would like to receive any of these items, please reply to this email with your request.

**These items are provided by the State of Wisconsin, paid for by the taxpayers, and merely distributed by my office. If you live outside the 24th SD, your legislator should be able to provide these to you.*

Thursday, Dec 12 th	Healthy Family Night	Central WI Children's Museum
Friday, Dec 13 th 8:30am-3:00pm	Tomah Area Caner Support Cookie Sale	Timberwook Bank, Tomah, WI
Friday, Dec 13 th 6:00pm	Christmas Parade	Polonia, WI
Friday, Dec 13 th – Sunday, 15 th 5:00pm-8:00pm	Enchanted Forrest	Rosholt Fair Park
Saturday, Dec 14 th 8:00am-12:00pm	Norwegian Bake Sale	Leon Town Hall
Saturday, Dec 14 th 10:00am-12:00pm	Tie Dye Workshop	UW Stevens Point
Saturday, Dec 14 th 11:00am-12:00pm	SPEAK National Wreaths Across America Day	Korean War Memorial, Plover, WI
Saturday, Dec 14 th 11:00am-2:00pm	Toy Exchange at the Children's Museum	Central Wisconsin Children's Museum
Saturday, Dec 14 th 1:30pm	Bells for Newtown, One Year Later	At exactly 1:30 pm, churches, universities and community buildings will join together, ringing their bells 26 times to honor the 20 children and 6 educators that lost their lives on December 14 th , 2012
Saturday, Dec 14 th 6:00pm-8:00pm	Community Christmas Carnival	Central Wisconsin Children's Museum
Sunday, Dec 15 th 8:00am-12:00pm	Sparta Eagles Lumberjack Breakfast	9901 Hwy 21 Sparta, WI
Sunday, Dec 15 th 1:00pm-3:00pm	Children's Christmas Party	Sparta American Legion

****If there are any other upcoming district events that are not included on this calendar, please send me an email so I can be sure to include it!***

Stay Connected!



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