



RON TUSLER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 3rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Representative Ron Tusler (608) 266-5831

Rep. Tusler Announces Support for Community Safety Proposal

Budget Proposal Addresses Systemic Needs in Criminal Justice System

Green Bay, WI – Today, Representative Ron Tusler (R-Harrison) joined his Assembly Republican colleagues across the state announcing a budget package addressing a variety of needs in the criminal justice system that will ultimately make communities safer. Rep. Tusler was joined by Representatives Macco, Nygren, Schraa, Steineke, and Steffen, and by Brown County District Attorney Dave Lasee and Jeff Cano, a regional attorney manager with the State Public Defender’s office. The package contains three elements: prosecutorial support, defense counsel, and incarceration and rehabilitation.

“Overall this proposal will enhance public safety, which transcends a political party,” said Rep. Tusler. “This proposal is a responsible way to meet the needs of stakeholders in the criminal justice system as no one stakeholder can properly play their role without the others fulfilling their obligations as well.”

The first component of the proposal authorizes an additional 60.85 Assistant District Attorney positions across the state. Funding for pay progression for both prosecutors and public defenders will ensure the attraction and retention of skilled attorneys on both sides of the bench.

Second, the proposal addresses Wisconsin’s lowest-in-the-nation \$40 reimbursement rate for private attorneys taking Public Defender appointed cases. Last summer, the Wisconsin Supreme Court raised the rate for court-appointed cases to \$100, but the Supreme Court’s order did not extend to Public Defender appointments. The proposal raises the rate to \$70 and provides further funding for counties for court appointments, 75% of which are guardian ad litem cases that provide representation for children. Further, a pilot program to incentivize private attorneys to take public defender cases in rural areas is also included in the proposal.

The third component encourages the Governor to address the pressing needs within the Department of Corrections. Assembly Republicans support Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) programs to keep non-violent offenders out of jail or prison while also treating an underlying addiction that most likely influenced the crime they committed. Training inmates in skills in order to help them find stable jobs and reintegrate into society once released is another measure that will support safe communities. Finally, with a 15.85% correctional officer vacancy rate, the Governor is encouraged to support initiatives that recognizes these public servants’ value and attracts and retains qualified individuals for these positions.

Governor Evers has pledged to release half of the state’s prison population. Roughly two-thirds of the Wisconsin prison population in 2018 was a violent offender. These Republican proposals will aid in the smooth reintegration of inmates into society and decrease the likelihood of future crime. Rep. Tusler does not support the early release of violent offenders.

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