



CALVIN CALLAHAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 35

Office: (608) 237-9135
Toll Free: (888) 534-0035

Rep.Callahan@legis.wi.gov
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708-8952

Correctional Officer Appreciation – Column by Rep. Callahan (R-Tomahawk)

Earlier this month was National Correctional Officers Appreciation Week, so I wanted to communicate just how important these individuals are to our state and some things I did this session to support them. Correctional Officers (COs) are key to keeping our communities safe throughout Wisconsin, including right here in the 35th Assembly District. They staff our state prisons, as well as the jails in every county. In past years, our COs have been overworked due to incredible vacancy gaps at our state correctional facilities. In Irma, at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake, the vacancy rate last year peaked at 44.7%, meaning the facility was operating at nearly half the staff needed. This led to tired, less alert staff being forced to work overtime, which could have led to dangerous situations. This situation at Lincoln Hills was not unique; it was happening all around Wisconsin.

I was proud to support the Republican budget that provided \$344 million to increase wages for security staff at our state facilities to help fill the vacancy gaps. Starting wages went from \$20.29/hr up to \$33/hr. It also funded paycheck add-ons for medium security (\$2/hr), maximum security (\$3/hr), and high-vacancy prisons (\$5/hr). I am proud to report that this is working! In mid-2023, the state's average vacancy rate was around 35%. In February 2024, it was down to 25%. Lincoln Hills is now down to 10.8%!

As I mentioned, COs also staff our jails in every county. I was proud to vote for legislation this session that ensured county jailers have access to the same benefits, such as early retirement, as other members of our law enforcement community through protective status. They help to keep our communities safe and I am thankful for all they do for us in the 35th Assembly District.