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# BARBARA DITTRICH

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

For Immediate Release  
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## **State Engagement and Assistance**

*State Legislators are listening and working on aid*

On Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> the Oconomowoc Enterprise shared a group letter from area community leaders responding to the Lake Country's substantial property tax increases and asking for more shared revenue from the State of Wisconsin. It has been my distinct honor as the State Assembly Representative to work with a majority of these community leaders for the past four years. Over the past year, I have had conversations with the Mayor of Oconomowoc and the President of the Village of Lac La Belle discussing both shared revenue and the Western Lake Fire District funding concerns. I would like to take this opportunity to share with the public some of what I shared with these leaders as well as the concerns I am hearing from constituents since they have received their tax bills.

First, I am acutely aware of the challenges facing our communities with shared revenues remaining static. We now live in a culture where people do not volunteer to serve in roles like fire fighter without compensation. Community services are not without cost. Furthermore, inflation and a great need for attracting more workers hits our municipal employers just as hard as private employers in this economic environment. This is especially problematic when it comes to essential services like first responders. That is why I have made my leadership aware of these concerns over the past year in particular. This is definitely an issue that we in the Legislature will be looking to address in this biennium's forthcoming budget, and it is a priority that I believe we share with the Governor.

At the same time, I am hearing from constituents who are furious about their property tax increase in this year's assessment. Transparency in government is particularly critical at this point in history. Taxpayers want to know how all of the COVID Relief and ESSER dollars have been spent and that they have been spent responsibly. Additionally, they want to know why the Oconomowoc Area School District is asking for \$92 million in new spending, in part, for a boiler whose replacement could have been paid for by those ESSER funds. I am hearing from constituents who are retired and are literally being taxed out of the community by these ever-increasing property taxes. Local leaders need to answer these concerns to our mutual constituents rather than merely pointing to the state.

I have worked hard in my tenure to keep taxes low for my constituents, and I share their frustration as my own property taxes for a modest home went up nearly \$900 as well. Far too many leaders have been eager to get their hands on the state budget surplus to spend those dollars. I have seen a disappointing amount of debate, pejoratives, and name-calling on social media over the property tax issue, which is the absolute worst place to discuss these complex matters. Most are not realizing that the state surplus comes from both fiscal restraint on the part of the Republican Legislature as well as federal COVID Relief dollars. While I agree our communities need more help, I want to caution leaders that we cannot fund long-term spending with one-time dollars. I have many concerns about the way we fund things in Wisconsin. My hope is that in the coming Legislative session we can build enough consensus to both fund our top priorities responsibly as well as give our over-taxed citizens the relief they deserve. If we are unable to achieve such a goal, it will only result in increasing worker shortages and an outflow of residents in this state.

Humbly,  
Barbara Dittrich  
State Representative  
Assembly District 38