



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Contact: Reps. Todd Novak & Travis Tranel
(608) 266-7502 & (608) 266-1170

State Assembly Passes Bill to Open All of Wisconsin's Historic Sites

MADISON – Rep. Todd Novak (Dodgeville) authored Assembly Bill 391 with Rep. Travis Tranel (Cuba City) and Sen. André Jacque (DePere). The bill directs the Governor to re-open all of Wisconsin's historic sites using funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

“During the height of the pandemic the Wisconsin Historical Society transferred staff to other agencies to help respond to the pandemic. The Historical Society now has a funding shortfall and cannot reopen a number of sites around the state,” said Novak. “Two of these historic sites, The First Capitol located in Belmont & Pendarvis in Mineral Point, are in the 51st Assembly District. The First Capitol is celebrating its 185th anniversary this year. Wisconsinites should have the ability to learn more about the first territorial government and celebrate the occasion of the 185th anniversary.”

Complete listing of closed sites:

- First Capitol – 185th Anniversary - Belmont
- H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum - Wisconsin Dells
- Pendarvis – Mineral Point
- Reed School – Neillsville
- Stonefield – Cassville
- Villa Louis – Prairie du Chien
- Wade House – Greenbush

The bill was quickly introduced, received a public hearing, and an affirmative recommendation from the Assembly Tourism Committee.

“Cassville Village President Keevin Williams told the Assembly Tourism Committee how important Stonefield Village was to his community's tourism economy. He strongly advocated for using federal COVID-19 funds to reopen the site this year,” said Tranel. “Every day Governor Evers allows these State Historical sites to be closed lets down the residents of southwest Wisconsin and our state.”

The bill was placed on the calendar for consideration before the full Assembly. Assembly Bill 391 passed the State Assembly today.



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“Beyond the appreciation for the historical significance of these sites, reopening is crucial for the local economies of Belmont, Mineral Point, and the other affected communities as their local tourism industries recover from the pandemic,” said Novak. “Unfortunately, efforts to work through Wisconsin Council on Tourism to persuade the Governor to fully reopen the sites have not been successful to date. I have not received an update from the Governor’s Office as to whether they are any closer to fixing this issue. Assembly Bill 391 would fix the problem and reopen all of Wisconsin’s historic sites.”

Assembly Bill 391 has now been sent to the State Senate for consideration. The bill must pass both chambers in the same form before the Governor can sign the measure into law.

Rep. Novak can be reached at (608) 266-7502 or by email at Rep.Novak@legis.wisconsin.gov and Rep. Tranel can be reached at (608) 266-1170 or by email at Rep.Tranel@legis.wisconsin.gov.

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