



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **GOVERNOR REVERSES COURSE, RELEASES PANDEMIC RELIEF FUNDING TO RE-OPEN STATE HISTORICAL SITES**

*State lawmakers say action supporting tourism industry is long overdue*

MADISON, WI...After several weeks delay, the Evers Administration today finally reversed course and announced the release of \$1 million to reopen Wisconsin Historical Society sites after the State Assembly this week passed legislation directing the Governor to do so.

The bill's co-authors, State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), State Rep. Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City), and State Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville), said the relief is long overdue for the state's tourism industry.

"While the closed sites are located outside of the 1<sup>st</sup> Senate District, our area tourism industry is uniquely connected to Wisconsin's history," Sen. Jacque said. "Opening these historical sites is crucial not just for local economies like Belmont, Mineral Point, Cassville, and Prairie du Chien, but for our state as a whole. Time is of the essence now with school out and summer upon us as we enter that season of peak demand for these sites. The return on investment for Wisconsin's tourism economy as a whole clearly justifies this investment."

The members of the Wisconsin Council on Tourism, including Acting Secretary Sayers, unanimously voted on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to send a letter to Gov. Evers requesting the use of these federal funds for this purpose, but his administration determined the Council did not properly post the meeting, and thus took no action.

"It's fantastic to hear that the Governor has decided to take our advice and move \$1 million from the American Rescue and Recovery Act (ARPA) funds to the State Historical Society which will help open up all the closed sites in southwest Wisconsin," said Rep. Tranel, Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Tourism. "I want to thank Lancaster Mayor David Varnam and Cassville Village President Keevin Williams for making the trip to Madison to testify in support of our bill. This was a lot more work than it should have been. However, at the end of the day we were able to persuade Governor Evers to do the right thing, which is great news for Wisconsin's tourism industry."

Legislation passed this week by the State Assembly ([Assembly Bill 391](#)) requires the Governor to direct federal ARPA relief funds to enable the State Historical Society to reopen historic sites and keep them open for the rest of this year.

Rep. Novak, lead Assembly co-author of the measure, said "I am glad to see Governor Evers allocate federal funds to re-open the state historic sites. In my view, this action was long overdue as we've known about this problem for some time. This action will offer a sense of relief to our local sites and will provide a much-needed boost to our tourism industry. I hope the Governor directs his agencies to move quickly to ensure the sites can open as soon as possible."

The Wisconsin Historical Society faced a budget shortfall of about \$2.4 million due to the loss of program revenue in 2020 because of pandemic related shutdowns. Due to the current funding challenges, the majority of Wisconsin's historical tourism sites would have remained shuttered until 2022 without pressure from the Legislature.

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