

SEPTEMBER '19: REP. OHNSTAD LABOR COLUMN

Although we were not on the Assembly floor voting on legislation in August or September, things were still busy both in Madison and Kenosha. I was pleased to stop in and see many old friends at the Brookside Annual Care Center Picnic. The 4th Annual Stop Heroin Rally was held as well and I was pleased to speak at it again this year. I gave an update of what's going on in an interview on Channel 14. UAW Local 72 held its first meeting at their new headquarters at the Union Club and I was pleased to give a report there as well. I attended an Eagle Scout Ceremony for Alex Columbus, an impressive young man whom I am sure has a bright future ahead of him.

I met with a group of leaders from the construction trades on a variety of issues and followed up with a meeting with a Legislative Liaison to Governor Evers. University of Wisconsin-Parkside welcomed UW-System President Ray Cross and UW-Board of Regents President Drew Petersen for a discussion with area business and civic leaders on how Parkside has been and can continue to be a great partner who is instrumental in the continued economic wellbeing of southeastern Wisconsin.

I invited my friend Mike Basford, the newly appointed Director of the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness, to a series of meetings with stakeholders in Kenosha. We began with a tour of the Shalom Center, where Mike was very impressed with this amazing operation. Next was a meeting with Mayor Antaramian and representatives from both the city and county who oversee area homelessness efforts. The day finished up with a meeting with Reverend Jonathan Barker from Grace Lutheran Church, Karen Kempinen from the Congregations United to Serve Humanity (CUSH) and others from the Kenosha inner city on their activities and perspective.

I testified at the Public Hearing by the Assembly Committee on the Environment on a bill which I am the lead Democrat on, Assembly Bill 190. This bipartisan bill aims to ensure wetlands mitigation takes place closer to the site of a development project avoid flooding and other environmental degradation. Governor Evers held a Press Conference on the importance of passing legislation to close the loopholes on background checks for firearms, which I was pleased to attend and support.

Early this session I was approached by Rick Gallo, President of the Kenosha AFL-CIO and asked to pursue legislation which would level the playing field between retirees on Social Security and a group of Federal Retirees receiving a civil service pension instead. Retirees receiving Social Security do not pay state taxes on those benefits while the others do. I have broad bipartisan support for this bill and hope to be able to see it passed and signed into law this session.