

FEB. 2020 REPS REPORT

As this legislative session nears an end, things have been busy in Madison. Between several public hearings in almost all of my committees, executive committee votes, and floor sessions, I've spent a lot of time in Madison in the last month. The most frustrating part of this job is the amount of time the Republican majority has spent advancing bills aimed at creating issues for "gotcha" political ads for the fall election, rather than addressing the real issues of the people of our state. We will close the session without even debating such important issues as additional education funding which became possible because of unanticipated revenue growth under Governor Evers' budget, an increase in the minimum wage, marijuana law reform, student debt relief, and dozens of other issues that are critical to Wisconsin families.

I was pleased to attend the State of the State by Governor Evers and the bipartisan reception following the event. There were also several bill signings by the Governor in the Capitol I was pleased to attend as a cosponsor of the bills. We held a press conference announcing a bill to increase the minimum wage, which brought a diverse group of people from around the state, including dozens from Milwaukee who had just negotiated their first union contract at Fiserv Forum, which will bring their hourly wage up to \$15. I was also pleased to attend a meeting with other area legislators with local realtors on legislation they are pursuing.

This month Governor Evers announced the appointment of Larisa Benitez-Morgan to become a Kenosha County Circuit Court judge, filling the vacancy from the retirement of Judge David Bastianelli. I share Governor Evers' assessment that Judge Benitez-Morgan will continue to be a great asset to Kenosha on the bench, as she has been as an attorney in our community, and look forward to working with her in the future.

The 26th Annual Martin Luther King Celebration at Gateway was another huge success, with a standing-room-only crowd. I was pleased to once again tour the Kenosha Community Health Centers and, as always, was impressed with the work they are doing and the capacity to provide even greater service to the Kenosha area. Along with other area legislators, UW-Parkside provided a great tour and update on all the exciting programs being offered there.

I was proud to help organize a press conference with Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes to announce a statewide initiative for fair legislative maps proposed by Governor Evers, and for Kenosha to be one of the cities that kicked off the program. Wisconsin has been called one of the worst gerrymandered states. Next year these maps will be redrawn again, and we must make sure they are fair. For example, in the last election in 2016 for State Assembly, Democratic candidates received 200,000 more votes statewide than Republican candidates, but they received 63 seats in the Assembly and Democrats received only 36.

There were two legislative breakfast events this past month. The first was at the Kenosha Achievement Center, which provides such great service to our community, and where I gained an idea for legislation I will work on for the next session. The next was sponsored by the American Association of University Women, which is always well-attended and provides an opportunity to report what is going on in Madison. Later that day I was once again pleased to read at the African American read-in. As usual, I also attended the monthly Labor Breakfast, which is open to the public on the first Saturday of every month at the Boat House. Breakfast starts around 7am, with remarks by all who wish around 7:30. Hope to see you there in the sometime soon.

If you wish to receive my email newsletter, if you need some help with a state related problem or if you have suggestions or criticisms, please contact me. You can call my office at (608) 266-0455 or by email at rep.ohnstad@legis.wisconsin.gov.