



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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VanderMeer Votes to Support Legislature's Budget

Madison – The State Assembly took up and passed the AB 56, the 2019-2021 biennial budget during a floor session today. Representative Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) voted in support and released the following statement:

"I think it's important to remember where we started with this session's budget. Earlier this year, Governor Evers proposed a budget that would increase government spending by \$6 billion, raise taxes and fees by over \$1 billion, not including property tax increases, and created a \$1.7 billion shortfall for the next biennial budget.

"The legislature and the Joint Committee on Finance took the Governor's budget recommendations, kept a number of the Governor's proposals, removed others, revised some, and also re-directed investment and savings as they saw fit, utilizing the input of the full legislature and individuals and families throughout the state, including the 70th district.

"The budget I supported today makes a number of investments that will have a big impact close to home, but does so in a way that responsibly allocates resources to continue to keep our state finances in a strong position. As a whole, the economy is tremendously strong right now but we need to be prepared for potential ebbs, flows, and downturns in the future. The "rainy day" or Budget Stabilization Fund will double under this budget with a projected transfer of \$291 million, growing the fund to over \$617 million by the end of the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

"The number one issue I've heard about from constituents, even before I was elected to office, is transportation. Our local towns, villages, and cities do well under this transportation proposal. This budget provides \$65 million for the Local Road Improvement Program - the program that provides assistance for municipalities to reconstruct roads - and lowers the local match for municipalities from 50% to 10%. That's three times the amount from current program funding. Also, there is a 10% increase allocated for local road aids and increased funding for the state highway rehabilitation program by 19%. This is all while utilizing the lowest level of borrowing since 2001. A number of cost saving proposals were also passed on the floor of the Assembly last week and those proposals continue to move their way through the regular legislative process.



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“On top of a \$500 million additional investment in K-12 funding levels that Governor Evers previously referred to as “kid friendly,” our local healthcare providers will receive a \$60 million general purpose revenue increase in Disproportionate Share Hospital funding in this budget, a \$5 million increase in what the Governor proposed. Disproportionate Share Hospital funding directs assistance to hospitals like Tomah Memorial, Black River Memorial, Gundersen Lutheran, Mayo Clinic, and Marshfield Clinic that serve a high share of Medicaid patients and allows them to not have to shift costs to families in the private insurance market.

“Those that care for some of our most vulnerable citizens, like the Personal Care Workers at Mid State Independent Living in Wood and Portage Counties, and the Direct Caregivers at Rolling Hills in Monroe County do well too. Personal Care Workers will receive a funding increase that changes the current reimbursement rate of \$16.73 to a new hourly rate of \$18.24 starting July 1, 2019. Direct Caregivers in Family Care will receive an increase as well, more than doubling base funding for the direct care workforce. Nursing homes such as The Morrow Home in Sparta and Edgewater Haven in Port Edwards will also receive an increase in \$30 million of general purpose revenue funding which equates to a 7.0% increase in nursing home reimbursement rates throughout the state. I know these funding increases will be put to good use.

“The number one ask from agriculture stakeholders was funding for a dairy innovation hub, housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls. The goal of the Dairy Innovation Hub is to help generate much needed new discoveries, train current and future industry leaders, and build a team of collaborators best positioned to provide interdisciplinary solutions to the complex challenges the \$88 billion agriculture industry in Wisconsin faces. This budget funds the hub, and that’s important.

“At the same time, this budget cuts taxes by over \$500 million and provides a middle class tax cut. Monroe, Jackson, Wood and Portage Counties even receive Assistant District Attorneys under this budget. That’s significant and something that our hard working District Attorneys will welcome. I would also be remiss if I didn’t mention the fact that Representatives Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua), Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), and I, with the help of former Governor Tommy Thompson, were able to advocate for and receive funding in this budget to make repairs to the Elroy-Sparta and 400 State Bike Trails which were desecrated as a result of area flooding last summer.

“As a legislator that has voted for and voted against recent budgetary proposals, I know that no budget is perfect. There are certainly items included in this budget that I take issue with, but as a whole, there’s a lot to like here, and there are a number of provisions that will make a positive impact close to home.”

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The 70th Assembly District includes portions of Monroe, Jackson, Portage and Wood counties.