



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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For Immediate Release  
February 18, 2019

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## Area Legislators Call for Criminal Justice Reform

**La Crosse** – Local law enforcement leaders today joined area Republican lawmakers to unveil a package of initiatives focused on improving the criminal justice system. These initiatives present comprehensive reforms that directly address an individual’s access to a fair trial and re-entry into the workforce.

“Ultimately, our criminal justice system is in place to ensure those who commit crimes are held accountable,” said Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc). “But it must also be a place to rehabilitate individuals to become successful, contributing members of our society.”

Republican legislators, joined by local District Attorneys, judges, and members of the law enforcement community, held a series of news conferences around the state to make the announcement. Locally, Representatives Tony Kurtz, Loren Oldenburg, and Nancy VanderMeer were joined by Monroe County District Attorney Kevin Croninger and Araysa Simpson, a Regional Attorney Manager with the State Public Defender’s office.

Assembly Republicans are asking Governor Evers to include the following initiatives in his state budget request to the legislature:

- Ensure quicker access to a fair trial: fund new Assistant District Attorney (ADA) positions, increase pay for ADAs and State Public Defenders (SPD), increase private bar rate for county court appointments and SPD appointments
- Expand Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) programs to help offenders who suffer from alcohol and drug issues
- Invest in the retention of correctional officers
- Promote the successful transition back into society through expanded worker training, reentry programs and health initiatives

“As an elected official, one of my top priorities is ensuring our local communities are safe,” said Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua). “The initiatives presented today are common sense, and will only help to strengthen our local criminal justice system.”

“Supporting access to a fair and timely trial for individuals in our criminal justice system is incredibly important,” said Rep. Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah). “As well as ensuring individuals are set up for success as they leave the system. These initiatives deliver on both fronts.”

Representative Kurtz, Oldenburg, and VanderMeer look forward to working with the Evers Administration on the criminal justice reform package. Governor Evers delivers his budget address on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>.

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