

**Update on the State Biennial Budget**  
by Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo)



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It's springtime in an even-numbered year, which means it is once again time to dig in to the Wisconsin State Biennial Budget. This past year has been a difficult one filled with uncertain times. Thankfully, we're continuing to overcome COVID-19 and returning to "normal" is on the horizon. However, we cannot forget the cracks that became apparent with the added strain of the virus.

Governor Evers introduced a budget proposal that recognizes these cracks and invests in solving them. The proposed budget prioritizes our agricultural economy through targeted investments to reduce meat processing infrastructure and workforce bottlenecks. This is extremely important – just ask any producer or processor. This budget also puts dollars towards encouraging market development for Wisconsin products, supporting our strong dairy industry, and providing producer resiliency resources.

The budget invests in our children through increasing sparsity aid payments by over \$19 million during the biennium. This will directly impact our school budgets in rural communities. Schools that do not fall into the sparsity aid bucket will still receive support as this budget pledges an increase to general state aid to school districts. As a former educator of 29 years, I recognize the importance of these investments. I also recognize the pivotal investment to fund supports for students with the greatest needs by increasing Wisconsin's high cost special education aid to 40% in fiscal year 2021-22 and 60% in fiscal year 2022-23. As someone who previously taught students labeled EBD, I understand the lasting difference this proposal will make for these students – both in the classroom and after their education is complete.

Our roads also receive needed attention through this budget as they allow our food to be transported to us, tourists to travel to our towns, and all of us to go about daily life. Through targeted program increases to local multimodal transportation projects and the general transit operation aids, this budget addresses the need for improved infrastructure. These investments are made while staying within historic lows for highway project bonding.

Wisconsin has to have a balanced budget, and this balanced budget is predicated upon the acceptance of federal healthcare dollars, limiting the manufacturing tax credit to the first \$300,000 of production, and limiting the 30% long-term capital gains exclusion for adjusted gross incomes below \$400,000 for individuals. This aligns with my fiscal conservative values and is a win for agriculture, our children, our businesses, and our bank accounts.

Budgets are about priorities. I want to hear from you about your feedback on the budget – what provisions do you agree or disagree with? Citizen engagement is pivotal and I enjoy hearing from you.