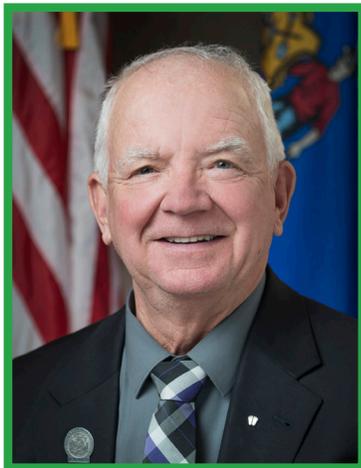




State Representative JAMES W. EDMING

Wisconsin State Legislative Update

Spring 2020



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As I often tell folks, representing the people of the 87th Assembly District is the best job I have ever had. It is an honor to be your voice in Madison. While there is no doubt that things have been different with divided government in Madison this session, there are still a number of good things that we were able to get done in the legislature for the people of Wisconsin. This session we successfully delivered on the following priorities:

- Increased total K-12 education funding to over \$12 billion, the most in state history.
- Invested a record \$44 million in rural broadband expansion grants.
- Passed a bipartisan package I co-authored aimed at improving water quality in our state.
- Continued the fight against heroin and opiate addiction by expanding the H.O.P.E. Agenda.
- Approved an agricultural aid package that provides short and long term relief for our farmers.

As always, if you have any thoughts on issues before the legislature please do not hesitate to reach out. I value your input as it helps me form my decisions on issues that come before me. Also, if you have any ideas for what we should pursue next session, feel free to share them with me. Some of the best bill ideas come from constituents just like you.

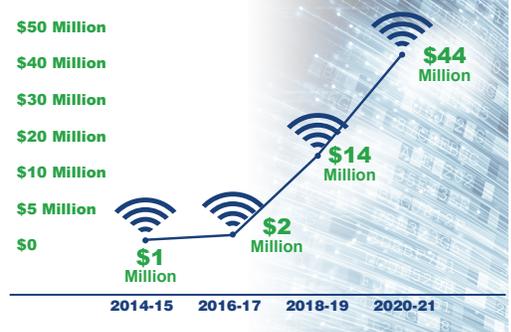
Sincerely,

James W. Edming
State Representative, 87th Assembly District



Earlier this year I was honored to help welcome Vice President Mike Pence to the State Capitol. He is the first sitting President or Vice President to visit our historic Capitol building.

Largest Broadband Investments



Please sign up for my E-Updates at RepEdming.com. You can also call, email and follow me on social media:

facebook.com/Rep.Edming

Phone: (608) 266-7506
Toll Free: 888-534-0087

Rep.Edming@legis.wi.gov
RepEdming.com



State Representative
JAMES W. EDMING



I appreciate all of the farmers from the 87th Assembly District who made the long trip to Madison to testify in support of AB 695/SB 628.

“ Thanks for your work. Proud to have you as my representative! ”

- Jordan from Westboro

»»» 2019 - 2020 Accomplishments and Highlights

Your Ideas in Action - Helping Our Farmers

A couple of years ago, I began hearing concerns from farmers in our area of the state about the major problems they were having with wildlife crop damage, primarily from bears. While any type of wildlife damage can cause problems, bear damage is particularly destructive.

I learned in conversations with these folks that the two programs that provide assistance to farmers facing wildlife damage, the wildlife damage abatement program and the wildlife damage claim program, were not fully meeting the needs of many farmers in our area of the state.

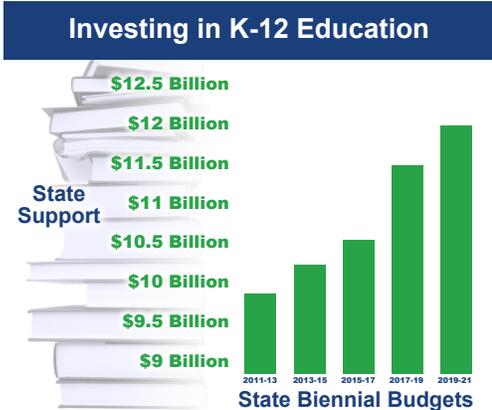
This session I worked with Senator Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) to draft Assembly Bill 695/Senate Bill 628 which reforms these programs. The biggest reform this legislation makes is lifting the \$10,000 cap on wildlife damage claims. A number of farmers in our area have been facing wildlife damages far in excess of the current \$10,000 cap, some in the range of \$30,000-\$40,000. Removing this cap will allow farmers to be compensated at levels much closer to their actual damages.

In addition, this bill makes various other changes to these programs to make them work better for our farmers. These changes include allowing payments for crop damage caused by operating a vehicle in a field in order to place a trap, creation of a second tier in the abatement program for farmers operating on leased land, and streamlining the administration of these programs under the Department of Natural Resources.

As this bill worked through the legislature, a number of constituents from the district came down to advocate for this important legislation. I appreciate their support and hard work. I hope that by the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox, this reform will have been signed into law.

Investing In Education

A big priority for the people of the 87th District in the state budget was K-12 education. I am pleased that the budget approved by the legislature builds upon the \$630 million in increased funding from last session’s budget and increases funding for K-12 education by an additional \$500 million. Over the course of the two-year budget, schools will see an additional \$604 per student. In total, we allocate over \$12 billion towards our state’s schools over this two-year budget, the most in state history.



A New Tool to Protect Local Roads

As a part of the state budget, the legislature made some significant investments in road funding, including an additional \$90 million targeted at local road repairs. Unfortunately, Governor Evers used his partial veto authority to cut \$15 million of this funding, as well as open these funds for other uses. As suspected when the governor announced the allocation of this funding millions of dollars were awarded towards transit, harbor improvements, bike paths, and other non-road projects.

In addition to investing more in our roads, it's also important to give local governments tools to help keep roads in good shape. A while back, local officials in Rusk County contacted me to share that they were having problems with beavers causing damage to local roads. While the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) does use measures such as trapping to prevent this problem, they are not always effective. Another tool that can be effective is shooting the animal that is causing the damage. However, discharging a firearm within 50 feet of the center of the road is currently prohibited under state law.

To solve this problem, I introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 592/Senate Bill 535, which would give the DNR or an agent of a local government authorized by the DNR the authority to discharge a firearm within the 50-foot buffer to shoot a beaver or muskrat that is damaging a roadway. Under this exemption, the DNR is still not required to permit the firearm discharge and can only do so if it does not pose a threat to public safety. At the time I am writing this update, AB 592 has been approved by the Assembly and is awaiting action in the Senate. I hope to see it become law by the end of the session.



Thank you to Town of Atlanta Chairman Steve Tiegs and Supervisor Roger Roehl for coming down to Madison to support AB 592/SB 535!

Helping Veterans Stay in Their Homes

We owe so much to our nation's veterans and their willingness to fight to protect our freedoms. That is why I was proud to work on legislation this session to provide property tax relief to more of our disabled veterans.

Currently, a disabled veteran must have a service-connected disability of 100% in order to qualify for the disabled veteran and surviving spouse property tax credit. This means that a veteran who has a service-connected disability rating of 80% or even 90% and still faces significant barriers to paying their property taxes is not getting the help they need to stay in their home. That is why I authored legislation to expand the eligibility for this tax credit to veterans with service-connected disability ratings of 70% or higher.

One thing I have learned during my time in the legislature is that great ideas can take more than one session to get across the finish line. While I am disappointed that we didn't get this bill done this session, I plan to continue fighting on this issue and hope to get this to the governor's desk next session.



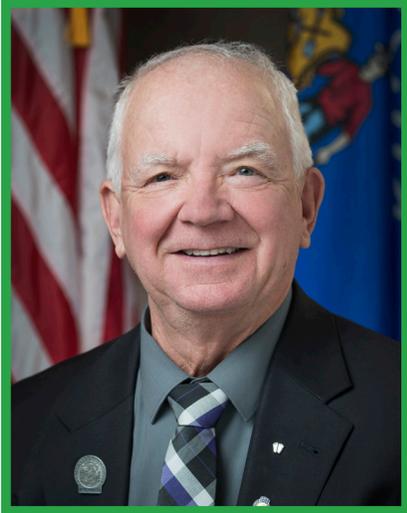
Working Across the Aisle

From what you see reported in the news, it looks like there is not much bipartisanship in the State Capitol. However, according to the nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau, approximately 94% of the votes taken in the Assembly this session were bipartisan votes.

Throughout the session, I also had the opportunity to sit down with Governor Evers in Madison as well as welcome him and Lt. Governor Barnes to the 87th Assembly District to discuss issues important to the people I represent. As I often tell folks around the district, I am willing to work with Governor Evers and his administration whenever I believe his policies are in the best interests of my constituents.



State Representative
JAMES W. EDMING



**Proudly representing the
 87th Assembly District**

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*“You’re doing a great job.
 Keep up the good work!”*

- Donald and Georgi
 from Ladysmith



Back in August, I was pleased to join with Senator Petrowski to present a legislative citation to Wilderness Walk Zoo in Hayward to commemorate their 50th year in business.

First Responder of the Year Award



Martin “Marty” Huhn of Sheldon was recognized as the 87th Assembly District’s First Responder of the Year during a floor session in October.