**Capitol Update**

***Passage of Mining Bill & Session***

**I have included some highlights from the floor session this week:**

**Senate Bill 27: “Audit Modernization Act”**The bill does away with the obsolete auditing requirements, such as: the auditing of the moneys, bonds, and securities on deposit in the state’s treasury, examining the money appearing in Department of Administration (DOA)’s books and ensuring that it is in the vaults of the treasury, and maintaining the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, which no longer exists.

Among other items, the bill adds on an annual financial audit of the University of Wisconsin System and requires the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) to keep information received from the Waste, Fraud, & Abuse hotline private. The bill passed unanimously on a voice vote.

**Assembly Bill 15: Unemployment
This bill permits an employer to establish a work-share program for employees. Work Share is an Unemployment Insurance program that allows a business to reduce the hours of all employees in a work unit during economic hardship instead of a complete layoff of a small number of employees. A person partaking in the program would be eligible for partial unemployment insurance benefits under this legislation. Prior to approval, the employer must submit a work share plan that follows state and federal labor regulations to the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). Assembly Bill 15 passed the State Assembly on a 74-22 vote.**

**Senate Bill 1: Mining Bill
This week, the State Assembly discussed the proposed mine in Northern Wisconsin. The primary concern for me is to balance the economic benefits while upholding environmental standards. I am committed to making sure citizens in Wisconsin and my district have economic opportunities. If a mine does occur, it would directly create jobs for a local construction company in our district.**

**I have visited the site of the proposed mine in Northern Wisconsin. I have talked with the people that reside in towns near the mine. I drank the water from a closed mine in the area. Residents and leaders of the communities in Northern Wisconsin expressed to me their support for the jobs that would result from the mine.**

**Passage of the bill does not guarantee that construction of a mine will occur. The permit will only be granted if the standards are met and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).**

**The bill passed the State Senate on a 17-16 vote and passed the State Assembly on a x-x vote. It now awaits the signature of Governor Walker.**

***Small Business Regulatory Review Board (SBRRB) Appointment & Chairmanship***

Recently, I was elected Chairman of the Board by members of the Small Business Regulatory Review Board. I was appointed by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos to serve as the Assembly representative on the board.

The Small Business Regulatory Review Board is comprised of seven small business owners and two members of the State Legislature. In 2011, Governor Walker issued an Executive Order reforming the Small Business Regulatory Review Board.

The purpose of the reformed Board is to give small business owners the opportunity to provide input when discussing state regulations. The Board will also assist state agencies in promulgating rules that affect employers in Wisconsin.

I am excited for the opportunity to represent the interests of small businesses in my district and across Wisconsin. Small businesses should have a seat at the table when we discuss rules and regulations that may affect them.

**In the District**

***Iowa County Listening Session***

I will be holding a listening session in Dodgeville to hear input from my constituents on various issues and their perspectives on the Governor’s proposed budget.

**Iowa County
Monday, March 11th
6-7pm
Iowa County Health & Human Services Building
303 West Chapel Street, Dodgeville**

I am looking forward to hearing opinions from my constituents about the proposed budget. The budget is a fluid and changing process; I want to keep my constituents updated with any changes to the proposed budget. This is a good opportunity for me to connect with my constituents and make sure they are informed about what we are debating in Madison.

***Wisconsin Newspaper Association Badger Award***

I recently received a legislative award from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association (WNA). The WNA represents the interests of newspapers and publishers in Wisconsin.

Each year, the WNA presents its “Badger Award” to two legislators who have provided outstanding support in the newspaper industry. The “Badger Award” is presented in recognition of advocacy for openness in government and an informed citizenry. The Badger Award is the highest award given by WNA to non-members. The award was presented to State Senator Joe Leibham (R-Sheboygan) and me for our work on Wisconsin Act 228, which updated the public notice process.

I was glad to work with the Wisconsin Newspaper Association and Senator Leibham to help update outdated provisions of the public notice statutes. Changes in the public notices process included standardizing the font and requiring that all public notices be published on the public notices website.

**[Photo]**
**Caption: Steve Dzubay (WNA outgoing Board of Directors President), Beth Bennett (WNA Executive Director), Carl Hearing (The Monroe Times), and me at the WNA conference.**
***Photo Credit: Christine Spangler, Managing Editor of the Daily Jefferson County Union in Fort Atkinson.***

**Helpful Information**

***Department of Agriculture, Trade, & Consumer Protection (DATCP) Consumer Alert: See Questionable Tax Practices?  Let DATCP Know!***

It is still early in the tax season, but Wisconsin consumers are already complaining loudly about potential tax fraud.  The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is seeing an increase in the number of consumer calls about fraudulent filings, and Wisconsin residents working with a tax preparation service are reminded to reach out to DATCP if they believe that there are questionable practices taking place at the business.

Complaints from consumers already led to a consent judgment for the state against the owner and operator of All Star Tax Service in Milwaukee.  The state sued the owner for a number of violations of consumer protection and lending laws, including making high-interest loans connected to his tax services.

Here are some tips to avoid becoming the victim of tax preparation fraud:

* Be alert to promotions such as “quick cash loans” that can be used to gain the personal financial information needed to file an individual’s tax return.
* Check the tax preparer’s qualifications and history.  Ask questions and get references from other clients if possible.
* Find out about service fees. Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of your refund or those who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.  Also, always make sure any refund due is sent to you or deposited into an account in your name. Under no circumstances should all or part of your refund be directly deposited into a preparer’s bank account.
* Make sure the tax preparer is accessible.  Make sure you will be able to contact the tax preparer after the return has been filed, even after the April due date, in case questions arise.
* Never sign a blank tax form.
* Never sign an authorization permitting a company to file your taxes if you do not want the company to do so.
* Never sign a document without first reading it and understanding what it says.
* Always insist upon receiving copies of all documents you are required to sign, or those that identify the terms of a transaction and the charges you will be required to pay.  Confirm, before signing, that you will receive copies.  If a business does not agree to provide copies, don’t sign.

Anyone suspecting fraudulent activity is encouraged to file a complaint with the state.  Complaints can be filed online through the DATCP website (<http://datcp.wi.gov>) or a complaint form can be requested by calling the state’s Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128.