



BRAD PFAFF STATE SENATOR

Senator Pfaff Votes “Yes” on Bipartisan State Budget

Senator Brad Pfaff

There is an old saying: *laws are like sausage, it is best not to see them being made.*

Well, the same can be said of the recently passed and signed state budget. While it is not the bill I would have introduced and the process was a bit messy, the final product is something that can be appreciated by people throughout Wisconsin.

The budget, resulting from negotiations between Democratic and Republican legislative leaders and Governor Evers, is a compromise. No one got everything they wanted, but the budget includes significant investments that will benefit the people of the Coulee Region. Here are a few highlights from the 2025 - 2027 biennial budget:

Prairie Springs Science Center: The budget includes \$194 million for the completion of the Prairie Springs Science Center at UW-La Crosse, as well as the demolition of outdated Cowley Hall. This is a big deal for the La Crosse community and economy, as well as Wisconsin’s ongoing workforce needs.

Targeted Income Tax Relief: The budget reduces Wisconsin's income taxes by over \$600 million annually. Most of the benefits will be distributed to 1.6 million working and middle-class taxpayers, with 82% of the relief going to those earning under \$200,000.

Child Care: The budget allocates \$360 million for child care, comprising direct payments to child care providers, a new “Get Kids Ready” initiative, increased rates for the Wisconsin Shares Program, and more.

Special Education Reimbursement Increase: The budget provides the largest increase in special education aid for K-12 schools in state history, increasing the rate to 42 percent and 45 percent in the first and second year of the biennium, respectively.

ARIP: The budget allocates \$150 million to the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP) for the repair and upgrade of rural roads, supporting farmers, producers, and the agricultural and forestry industries. Of that total, \$30 million is allocated for bridge and culvert repairs.

Energy Sales Tax Relief: The budget eliminates the sales tax on household utility bills to reduce energy costs, saving Wisconsin households more than \$178 million over the next two years.

Talent Recruitment Grants: The budget includes \$5 million for talent recruitment grants, a bipartisan bill I was proud to author earlier this year. The initiative will help our local communities recruit out-of-state workers. Not only will this help address our state's ongoing workforce needs, but these new families will also contribute to the growth of our local economies.

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EMS Tuition Reimbursement: In June, the Wisconsin State Senate passed a bill to support aspiring EMS providers. The proposal would establish a tuition reimbursement program for students completing their EMS education, as well as assist Wisconsin Technical Colleges with the costs of offering the EMS class. The state budget included funding to support this program. The EMS bill now awaits approval from the State Assembly and Governor Evers.

And returning to my opening analogy, sometimes we know that a few more ingredients would have made the sausage better. So, I would be remiss not to mention how this budget falls short, specifically in public education. More could and should have been done in funding our K-12 public schools. As a proud graduate of Melrose-Mindoro High School, I know firsthand the importance of our public school system, ensuring that regardless of one's socioeconomic background or zip code, a quality public education is a must. I will continue that fight alongside my Democratic colleagues in the State Legislature to provide our schools with the resources they both need and deserve.