



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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For Immediate Release
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JACQUE, KITCHENS, COMMUNITY LOOK FORWARD TO SPRING RE-OPENING OF POTAWATOMI TOWER

NE WI lawmakers urged Gov. Evers to repair and preserve historic Door County structure

MADISON... The imminent reopening of the Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower is a tribute to area citizens and local governments coming together to make their voices heard through seven years of ups and downs pushing this historical preservation project, two area state lawmakers said today.

State Sen. André Jacque and State Rep. Joel Kitchens said this was the outcome they have been working toward for several years before the Governor finally included their initiative to fund this repair project in the 2023-25 state budget.

“I am grateful to the people in our area who refused to give up until DNR officials would listen to them and preserve the Potawatomi Tower,” Sen. Jacque said. “Studies proved it was still repairable, and now we are on the brink of finally getting it done.”

“The Tower is historically significant for the emergence of tourism as an industry in Wisconsin, as it is the first purpose-built tower in a Wisconsin State Park, Forest, or Recreational Area,” Rep. Kitchens said. “I’m happy the Governor agreed with us and moved beyond his administration’s past efforts to tear down this beloved and historic structure.”

Christie Weber, past President of the Sturgeon Bay Historical Society, said the Tower repair was the right solution for historic preservation, as proven by a feasibility study performed by world renowned wood expert Dr. Dan Tingley, which the group paid for and donated to the state. “We’re thrilled, and I really know this was a bipartisan effort, fully supported by the community,” Weber said. “I can’t wait to keep the Tower for another 100 years.”

In March 2024, in response to local pressure and a written request from Sen. Jacque and Rep. Kitchens, the Evers administration finally yielded to public opinion and agreed to a \$500,000 emergency stabilization project to preserve this treasured landmark for future generations. The 2023-25 state budget then included a Jacque-Kitchens amendment allocating an additional \$500,000 to complete repairs on the existing Tower.

“It’s been a long road to change minds within the DNR and the Evers administration to hear pleas from local citizen groups and government officials to restore and stabilize the Tower before it succumbed to the elements and fell over,” Sen. Jacque said. “I’m glad the Governor finally got the message and switched course, so that the years of willful neglect did not destroy this vital piece of our area’s livelihood and heritage.”

“The repair of this tower was a unifying cause in our community. We saw support from individuals, organizations, and local government,” Rep. Kitchens said. “I’m glad the Governor finally approved funding so that it will again be safe for our residents and visitors to climb this spring. We have been waiting a long time for this!”

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced Monday that the Observation Tower at Potawatomi State Park would re-open to the public as soon as the weather allowed this spring.

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