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Rep. Mark Spreitzer proposes halt to legislative frenzy

MADISON- Anticipating a week of frenzied Senate and Assembly activity in Madison, today Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) introduced a bill to bolster the legislative process and better ensure full consideration of proposals before either body.

“Over the past two weeks, the Senate and Assembly have rushed bills through public hearings and fast tracked bills in order to get them on jam packed floor calendars,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “Legislators have an obligation to represent our constituents to the best of our ability, and the current speed of the legislature does not put enough importance on that duty.”

This week, the Assembly and Senate will take up massive floor calendars to move numerous bills as quickly as possible and allow members to leave town for the year. On February 16, the State Assembly will consider 110 bills while the State Senate will consider 47. The Assembly is scheduled to consider an additional 88 bills on Thursday. The State Assembly is then preparing to adjourn following Thursday’s session, even though 10 full months remain in the year.

“When too many bills are pushed too quickly through poorly attended committee meetings and then onto a bloated floor calendar, the quality of legislating and representation suffers,” Rep. Spreitzer added. “This is not how the Wisconsin legislature should do its business.”

Rep. Spreitzer’s bill proposes three common sense reforms:

1. Limit both the percentage of Assembly or Senate committees that can meet on any day or in any week, and the number of bills they can consider at any one meeting. This will allow legislators to attend the majority of their committee meetings and fully vet legislation.
2. Limit the number of bills that the Assembly or Senate can consider on any floor session day or in any session week so that legislators may adequately review all legislation they will be voting on.
3. Prohibits an Assembly or Senate committee from holding an Executive Session the same day as a floor session for that house, so that legislators can focus their attention on the bills they will consider on the floor.

“There is a limit to the number of bills that the public, and their elected representatives, can adequately review in a day or in a week,” Rep. Spreitzer noted. “By spreading out our activity, we can take the time to talk to our constituents, allow them to digest issues, hear their concerns, and do our jobs properly.”

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