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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update By Senator Howard Marklein May 15, 2015

Joint Finance Committee Restores ADRCs, Public Radio and Television

The legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has been consistently meeting over the last couple of weeks to whittle through Governor Scott Walker's proposed budget. So far, we are staying on track to finish our version of the state budget by the end of the month before it is delivered to the full legislature for a vote and then on to Governor Walker for signature.

Late last week, we received some disappointing news that the new state revenue numbers did not give us additional revenue to use as we work through the budget process. As a result, it is especially important for us to sharpen our pencils throughout the budget process. My colleagues and I continue to seek ways to save funds and apply them to priorities. To date all of our actions have improved the General Fund's condition by \$48.9 million.

The last several weeks, we have worked on low-hanging fruit – all of the things we could do without a clear picture of projected revenue – but now that we know where our numbers are, we will be more aggressively seeking ways to improve the funding for priority areas like education, and reduce spending in others.

This week, the JFC decided to preserve Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) services in our community. I know how important the maintenance of ADRCs is to our community as a whole. I am proud to share this good news and appreciate all of the input and encouragement I received throughout the budget process in support of ADRCs. Our local ADRCs will continue to serve all of the people in each of our communities. As your State Senator, I know the value of the personal connections that are built within ADRCs and I fought to keep them intact. (5/14/15)

We also restored \$1.6 million to the Educational Communications Board (ECB) for Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) and Wisconsin Public Television (WPTV). Compared to the nationwide average of state support for public broadcasting, Wisconsin public radio and TV receives 10.9% more state support than other states. The funding restored on Tuesday is 30.9% of the ECB's budget. This is a reduction of only 5.5% compared to the Governor's plan which would have reduced it further. (5/12/15)

In addition, the JFC took the following important actions:

- **Mental Health Crisis Service Grants** - Increased funding to counties by \$1.5 million for mental health support services and changed some of the rules related to this program. (5/12/15)
- **Domestic Abuse Grants** – increased funding by \$5 million in the second year (2016-17). (5/12/15)

- **Human Trafficking Victim Services** – increased funding by \$2 million in the second year (2016-17). (5/12/15)
- **Collaborative Municipalities** – created a levy limit exemption for municipalities who collaborate with other municipalities for various services and projects. We want to encourage policies that promote efficiency and collaboration to minimize duplication of services in our communities. For example – shared ambulance and EMS services. (5/14/15)
- **Carryforward** – addressed the “tax to the max” policy. Our current tax limits inadvertently encourage communities to levy taxes to the limit because if they don’t use them they aren’t able to recover these dollars in the subsequent year. This new policy will encourage communities to tax for their needs, but preserve upward mobility in the future. To achieve this, we created a levy limit adjustment allowing a political subdivision to increase its allowable levy by the amount of unused levy authority from prior years and set the maximum carryforward factor to 5%. (5/14/15)

Again, this column highlights just a few of the changes we have made to the state budget. I look forward to continuing to communicate with you about these important issues and welcome your input and ideas.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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