



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

December 16, 2016

2016 Legislative Year In Review

The second year of the Wisconsin legislature's biennium is usually comprised of a flurry of legislative activity from January through April with political campaigns dominating the remainder of the year. As your State Senator, I serve a four-year term between elections and this biennium was an off year. This was a new experience for me.

State Representatives in Wisconsin serve two-year terms. This means that every State Representative is up for election during the second part of each biennium. Since 2010, I have worked in this type of cycle.

2016 was different. As your State Senator, I was fortunate to be able to continue my work on your behalf without having to divert any attention to a campaign. While all of my colleagues in the Assembly are skilled in this delicate balance, it is also a pleasure to have the time to tackle some big-picture issues during an "off" year that we can now work on during the new legislative session.

I am proud of our work on your behalf in 2016. I am encouraged by our progress and optimistic about the coming legislative session which begins on January 3, 2017. The following highlights are a sample of the initiatives, ideas and legislation I worked on with the help of many residents of the 17th Senate District during the past year:

67% Success – Throughout the 2015-16 biennium, I was able to move 30 of 45 bills that I introduced through the legislative process to become law. I strongly believe that our success is due, in part, to the high quality and universal applicability of the legislation we introduced on your behalf. Most of the ideas for these bills came directly from constituents who asked for my assistance in making these changes to law. [For an overview of our success, please refer to my column from April 8, 2016.](#)

Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Rural Broadband – Throughout the summer and into the autumn months I chaired the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Rural Broadband to take a closer look at the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program and ways to increase investment in rural broadband expansion overall. This committee included Michelle Olson from the Town of Harrison in Grant County, Jim Costello from Lynxx Lemonweir Telecom in Juneau County and Ron Brisbois from the Grant County Economic Development Corporation.

This committee worked hard to craft potential legislation for the coming session that will improve the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program. It also spurred a lot of deep discussion, research and analysis of the rural broadband issue overall that I will be using as I seek ways to improve access in our rural communities. Overall, the Study Committee process was an interesting exercise and I am honored to have had the opportunity to lead an effective effort that achieved our goals.

Constituent Work – Even when the legislature is not in session, there are still residents in our communities who need our help. My Capitol office team fielded 8,635 phone calls, emails, letters or contacts from residents of the 17th District.

Constituent work takes on many forms. Some people call to provide input and ideas about specific legislation. Others are seeking assistance with a state government matter. These types of contacts do not end when our legislative calendar closes for the year and that is exactly why I am proud to maintain a responsive team in the Capitol office no matter where we are in the legislative calendar.

For example, an individual who needs help sorting through a confusing unemployment compensation claim doesn't care whether we are in session or not. A municipality seeking assistance to collaborate with the Department of Transportation on a road striping issue doesn't need the legislature to take official action. We don't need to be in session to support a local non-profit organization's grant application or to recognize a retiring municipal clerk with a legislative citation. Constituent work is one of the most important parts of my role as your state senator and it continues year round.

Out and about in the 17th Senate District – In addition to our work in the State Capitol, I spend a lot of time traveling to the communities of the 17th District to participate in community events, meet people and experience the great things about our communities. Over the summer, I had a terrific time at a myriad of farm breakfasts, parades and festivals. I also took advantage of the down time to tour several companies and to meet with community leaders to learn more about the challenges and opportunities we face.

E-Update, Communication and Survey – If you are reading this column, you likely know that I continued to write and share my E-Update on a weekly basis throughout the last year. I hope that you have found the content to be useful and valuable. I am always seeking to share information that you won't find anywhere else. I see my E-Update and weekly column as one of the best ways to connect you directly to your state government. If you are not a subscriber, please send me an email at Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov and I will add you to my list.

Last week I shared my 2017-2018 Legislative Survey to seek your input. This survey will be open until January 31, 2017. Please take a moment to share your input and ideas as I work on my plans for the next session.

In January, I am planning a schedule of 10 listening sessions throughout the 17th Senate District, including several on Saturdays per the request of constituents. This schedule is included with this week's E-Update and will also be shared with our local media. I hope you will be able to join me.

Overall, I am very proud of our work together on behalf of the 17th Senate District in 2016. I am looking toward 2017 with optimism and enthusiasm. My five areas of focus include working on the state budget, promoting rural issues, tax and revenue issues, problem solving, government reform and representing the unique needs of the communities I serve.

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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