



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

April 29, 2016

Committee Work Ethic

The Wheeler Report, a legislative news service that covers the Wisconsin legislature, recently released a summary of committee hearings and executive sessions for the 2015-16 Legislative Session. Committees do much of the heavy-lifting in the legislature and are an extremely important part of the legislative process.

Legislators are assigned to committees by their party's leadership. Each committee has a specific number of majority party members and minority party members, depending on whether it is a joint, Senate or Assembly committee.

Party leadership assigns legislators to committees based on their areas of expertise and interest. Long-time legislators often serve on the same committees throughout their career as they gain expertise and knowledge about specific issues and laws. As I've discussed before, we all work in our wheelhouse.

Committees hold public hearings to seek public input on legislative proposals. Every bill must be given a public hearing. Experts, citizens and stakeholders are invited to provide feedback and input on specific bills that are referred to a committee. It is also the opportunity for legislators to ask questions. Most often, these hearings are held at the State Capitol, but we also plan hearings in other parts of the state for some bills. For example, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), which works on the state budget, always plans a series of hearings throughout the state to gather input.

Once a hearing is held, the committee is able to hold an executive session to formally vote on the proposal. If a majority of the committee votes in favor of the proposal, it is available to be scheduled for consideration by the full legislature.

Committees are where issues are discussed, ideas are considered and input is collected. Once a bill works through the committee process, it has been well-digested by the legislature.

Among the Joint, Senate and Assembly committees, there are 63 individual committees with a specific purpose. As of this week, these 63 committees held 883 meetings during the 2015-16 session. There were many more public hearings than executive sessions with 491 hearings and 392 executive sessions across the legislature.

The Senate has 17 committees that held 39 public hearings and 39 executive sessions. The Assembly has 36 committees that held 272 public hearings and 173 executive sessions. There are 10 Joint committees, that include both Assembly and Senate members. These committees, including the budget-writing JFC

held 37 public hearings and 52 executive sessions. The JFC is continuing to meet this summer and into the fall on several specific issues such as long term care and other budget-related items.

I currently serve on five of these committees, as well as two boards and two commissions that are not included in this count. I am currently the Chair of the Senate Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues committee. This committee held 14 public hearings and 13 executive sessions.

I am also appointed to the JFC, the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems, the Senate Labor and Government Reform committee, and the Senate Transportation and Veterans Affairs committee. I also serve on the Governor's Commission on Government Reform, the Small Business Regulatory Review Board, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority board (WHEDA) and the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway commission.

The five legislative committees on which I serve held a total of 112 meetings between hearings and executive sessions these past two years. I am proud to report that I was present for all 112 of these meetings.

As your State Senator, committee attendance is an important part of my job. While I spend considerable time in study, analysis, preparation and meetings about most of the issues we discuss during committee; connecting with my colleagues and listening to testimony at committee meetings is an essential part of the legislative process.

All committee membership is assigned on a session by session basis. As a result, my committee assignments may change in January 2017. However, it is my hope to continue to serve on committees where I may add value and expertise to the conversation. I look forward to continuing this important part of my role as your State Senator.

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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