



ROBERT W. WIRCH

STATE SENATOR TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT

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State Budget Surplus Provides Legislature Opportunity to Finally Address Homelessness

Madison - Sen. Bob Wirsch (D-Somers) is calling on the State Legislature, particularly Republicans who control both houses, to use a portion of the state's projected \$3.8 billion budget surplus to address the state's homelessness problem.

"It's been three and a half years since the bipartisan report provided a roadmap for addressing homelessness in our state, and Republicans have done virtually nothing. The news of a larger than expected budget surplus takes the financial excuses off the table. With time running out on this session, I'm calling on Speaker Vos, Majority Leader LeMahieu and other Republican leaders to get serious about tackling this increasing problem," Wirsch said.

In 2018, the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness (WICH), a bipartisan coalition chaired by then-Republican Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, released a number of policy recommendations for helping those dealing with and preventing future homelessness. While the Legislature enacted the policy recommendations, they refused to actually fund the programs. In his 2021-2023 budget proposal, Governor Tony Evers tried again to fund these programs, proposing a \$70 million investment in homelessness programs over the biennium; Republicans approved a mere \$1.2 million. Our neighbors to the west in Minnesota spend roughly \$40 million per year on homelessness mitigation and prevention. Studies have shown Wisconsin's homeless population has only grown throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Homelessness isn't just a problem in Democratic districts; Republicans have homeless men, women and families in their districts, too. It would take just a small fraction of the projected surplus to fully fund the Council's recommendations. There is no excuse for inaction," stated Wirsch.

Senator Wirsch represents Wisconsin's 22nd Senate District, which includes the City of Kenosha, most of the City of Racine, and parts of Somers, Mount Pleasant, and Elmwood Park.

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