

September 16, 2022



Dear friends,

Currently, the U.S. Department of Defense classifies 81,500 American service members as officially “missing in action”. The third Friday in September is designated as National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which is today. The designation began in 1979 through an act of Congress at the urging of the families of more than 2,500 Vietnam War POW/MIAs. The purpose is to ensure that Americans remember those who served and never returned. I’ll have more later in this edition on POW/MIA Recognition Day; however, I urge you all to take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by service members whose ultimate fates remain unknown, as well as their families.

Until next time, stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bob

small business **SPOTLIGHT**



Downtown Racine Hosts “Party on the Pavement” This Saturday

This Saturday, September 17, from noon to 7 pm, Downtown Racine Corporation will host the 19th annual Party on the Pavement. The street festival will include more than twelve blocks of live music, food and drinks, street performances, shopping, games and rides. The weather forecast looks great, so it should be a good time for the whole family. Admission to the grounds is free; the event will take place throughout downtown on Main Street from State Street to 7th Street, and all of 6th Street from Lake Avenue to City Hall. With four live music stages, there is sure to be a little something for everyone’s taste. Major sponsors of the event include Zeigler Honda of Racine; Real Racine; S.C. Johnson; Educator’s Credit Union; BRP; and Gruber Law Office. Find more [here](#).

In Case You Missed It



Wisconsin Republicans Should Honor MIA Service Members and Their Families by Funding the MIA Recovery Project

Today is National POW/MIA Recognition Day, at time to remember those service members who have never come home from the battlefield and pay tribute to the sacrifices they and their families have made. I’m sure that many of my Republican colleagues will issue statements or make social media posts referencing the day and expressing their appreciation. However, as the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words, and instead of honoring their service, Wisconsin Republicans have instead been using MIA service members as political pawns.

Since 2015, UW-Madison has run the MIA Project, through which a team of faculty, staff and students from a number of different fields assist in the discovery, exhumation, identification and return of remains of missing-in-action American service members. The federal Department of Defense currently lists 81,500 American service members as still “missing in action”. The MIA Project has brought closure to a number of families who had waited decades for answers on the fates of their loved ones. During the 2019-2020 legislative session, I co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would have provided \$180,000 per year for the Project; Republican leadership denied the bill a vote before the end of the session. Governor Evers included the funding in his 2021-2023 state budget proposal before Republicans rejected it, saying they would pass standalone legislation. That bill, which I also co-sponsored, was again not given a vote in the Assembly before Republican leadership gaveled out to end the 2021-2022 legislative session.

As a veteran of the Army Reserves, I can’t imagine the suffering that families of POW/MIA service members must go through. It’s difficult to truly grieve and heal without knowing the ultimate fate of your loved one. That is what makes Republican efforts to block this small amount of funding all that more frustrating and infuriating. It’s nothing less than shameful, partisan politics at its worst.



Biden Administration Helps Broker Tentative Deal to Avert Rail Strike

Phone calls made by President Joe Biden appear to have jumpstarted talks between union rail workers and the railroads that led to a tentative agreement this week. The breakthrough averts a potential strike that some say would have been devastating to the American economy. In a speech announcing the deal Thursday morning, Biden said, “This agreement is validation – validation in what I’ve always believed: unions and management can work together.”



**DISABILITY
VOTING RIGHTS WEEK**
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Advocates and Activists in Wisconsin Recognize Disability Voting Rights Week, Celebrate Recent Victory in Ballot Assistance Case

September 12-16 is Disability Voting Rights Week, a national, nonpartisan effort to raise awareness of voting rights and the challenges faced by people living with disabilities. The

Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition held events all around the state this week to provide education on guardianship and voting rights. They also want to raise awareness of an issue specific to voters with disabilities in Wisconsin. Earlier this year, the conservative majority on the Wisconsin State Supreme Court ruled that absentee ballot drop boxes could not be used and that voters themselves were the only people allowed to return their individual ballots. This ruling was challenged in federal court, where a judge ruled that voters with disabilities must be allowed to have assistance in completing and returning their ballots.

Nationally, more than 38 million people with disabilities are eligible to vote. Discrimination and inaccessible voting processes have created a gap in turnout between voters with and without disabilities. Barriers to voting for people with disabilities include poor access to transportation; inaccessible polling places; lack of acceptable photo ID; and limited awareness about voting rights and accommodations on the part of poll workers and voters.



SENATE SCHOLARS
WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

“Senate Scholars” Program Seeking Applicants

The Wisconsin State Senate’s Senate Scholars Program is currently seeking applicants for the 2023 sessions. The Senate Scholars Program is open to all Wisconsin high school juniors and seniors aged 16-18. The program is an intensive, week-long educational program offered by the Wisconsin State Senate. Admission is highly competitive and is limited to thirty-three academically exceptional high school juniors and seniors from across Wisconsin, one from each

State Senate district. Each Senate Scholar receives a hands-on, up-close view of the Legislature’s role in our democracy. Senate Scholars gain experience in such diverse areas as policy development, constituent relations, and processing legislation by working with Senators, legislative staff, and the University of Wisconsin faculty. The fee for attending the program is \$250; this includes the cost of lodging and all meals. Applications are due by November 15, and applicants will be notified of admissions status by December 15, 2022. Participants will be able to choose from one of three week-long sessions: January 22-27; February 12-17; March 12-17. You can find the application, and more information, [here](#).



BBB Notes Increase in Scams Targeting Seniors

The Better Business Bureau is alerting the public to an increase in scams targeting seniors. The

BBB says to be mindful of scams, which often come through phone calls and emails. If your elderly loved ones have gotten a lot of messages that seem suspicious, encourage them to talk to you about it and make sure their information isn't in jeopardy. The BBB also recommends not sharing too much personal information online.



Local Reports of “Ruse Burglaries” on the Rise

The Kenosha County Sheriff's Department and several local municipal police departments are seeing a rise in reports of what are called “ruse burglaries”. These occur when a person comes to your home unscheduled and uninvited and gives an excuse for why they need to get into your home and/or why you need to leave your home. They sometimes present themselves as utility workers or contractors. These criminals target senior citizens; are often in small groups that coerce residents out of their homes or lead them to an area of the house away from the entrances, allowing them to enter your home unnoticed and steal valuables; frequently use vehicles that are newer, clean-looking pick-up trucks or SUVs that they stage to look like work or utility vehicles. Relatedly, there have been reports of residents receiving mailers purporting to be from the local water utility, stating that workers will be in the area to conduct city and well water analysis. Again, this is likely a ruse to get into your home. Be suspicious if any utility worker or contractor comes to your home, especially if they are unscheduled and uninvited. You can contact the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department or the local police department, and they will be happy to check the individuals out for you. Do not let them into your home. If you feel something isn't right, trust your gut.



Wisconsin Launches Program to Send Out Free Covid Tests

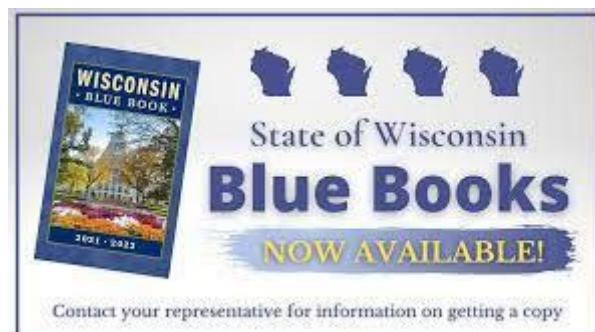
Wisconsin residents can now get Covid-19 tests sent to them free of charge from the state. The federal government had been offering free Covid tests, but the funding for that program has run out.

The Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services (DHS) says that the [Say Yes! Covid Test website](#) is now live and operational. The site allows households to order five rapid tests for free. Households can still get up to eight rapid Covid tests per month through their insurance providers, as well.



Take My 2022 Legislative Survey

It's very important to me as a legislator to hear what you think about the important issues of the day. I've put together a survey on a variety of topics that I am hoping you will take the time to complete. You can find an online version of the survey at <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/22/wirch/surveys-and-petitions/2022-legislative-survey>.



Reserve Your Copy of the 2021-2023 State of Wisconsin Blue Book

The latest edition of the State of Wisconsin Blue Book has arrived. If you would like to have a copy sent to you, contact my office at (608)267-8979 or sen.wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov. These books are free and contain interesting and valuable information about our state's culture, history and government.