

December 17, 2021



Dear friends,

The holiday season is upon us. It's no secret that we live in a turbulent world, where there is a lot of anger and fearfulness. My wish for all of you this holiday season is that you all find some levels of peace, joy, reflection, thankfulness and togetherness. May the New Year bring with it a renewed sense of hope and optimism for a better, brighter tomorrow after a long, difficult year (or two). Bring on 2022. Until then, stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bob

small business SPOTLIGHT



Governor's "Business Plan Contest" is in This Week's Small Business Spotlight

The 19th annual Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest is accepting entries online for the 2022 competition through 5 pm Monday, January 31, 2022. There is a new aspect to the contest this year: the third round will include narrated "pitch decks", brief PowerPoint-type presentations, from those finalists who advance beyond the written executive summary round. The contest is designed to encourage entrepreneurs in the startup stage of tech-based businesses in Wisconsin. It links up-and-coming entrepreneurs with a statewide network of community resources, expert advice and mentoring, and possible sources of capital. The contest often leads to valuable public and media exposure for the top submitted plans. In 2021, the finalists shared in more than \$125,000 in cash and service prizes. For initial entries, contestants will submit a 250-word idea abstract online at govsbizplancontest.com. Contestants will find business plan templates, startup information, networking contacts and technical resources from a mix of state and national resources on the site, as well. Those who advance to subsequent rounds will expand their plan in stages. About 80 volunteer judges drawn from the finance, sales, marketing, research and technology sectors will score the entries and provide feedback. Access to mentors and expert feedback makes this a great learning opportunity for anyone with an idea for a tech-based startup. Since its inception in 2004, more than 4,300 entries have been received and about \$2.5 million in cash and services, such as legal help, accounting, office space and marketing, have been awarded. Contest categories are Advanced Manufacturing, Business Services, Information Technology and Life Sciences.

In Case You Missed It



Governor Evers Visits Gateway to Announce New Workforce Development Grants; Gateway, Parkside, City of Kenosha Big Winners

Governor Tony Evers made another visit to Kenosha this week. This time, he stopped at Gateway Technical College's Horizon Center, where he announced a new Workforce Innovation Grant Program to address the ongoing shortage of skilled workers. Through the program, Gateway will receive up to \$5.6 million, the UW System, including Parkside, will get up to \$5.7 million; and the City of Kenosha will be awarded up to \$990,000 for workforce development programs. These funds allocated to states through the federal American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law earlier this year by President Joe Biden.



Covid Vaccine Boosters Now Recommended for Those 16 and Up; Case Numbers Still Dangerously High

State and federal health officials are recommending that 16- and 17-year-olds receive a booster dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine at least six months after having received their second dose. This recommendation supplements the previous recommendation that anyone 18 and older receive a booster at least six months after completion of their Pfizer or Moderna primary vaccination series or two months after a single shot of Johnson & Johnson.

State Capitol, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882 • (608) 267-8979

Toll-Free Office Hotline: 1-888-769-4724

Email: Sen.Wirch@legis.state.wi.us • Website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen22/news> • Fax: (608) 267-0984
(262) 694-7379

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Meanwhile, officials have now identified several cases of the Omicron variant here in Wisconsin, while cases from Delta remain critically high all around the state. Some hospital systems are suspending elective procedures, and a hospital in Baraboo was forced to shut down its Urgent Care Department indefinitely due to patient overload stretching staffs thin. Officials also worry that gatherings taking place during the coming holidays will lead to an even bigger surge in January.



Senate Committee Hearing on Covid Anti-Vax Legislation Canceled Due to - You Guessed it - Covid

In the “You Can’t Make This Stuff Up” Category, this week a public hearing of the Senate Labor Committee, of which I’m a member, was canceled due to either a Covid exposure or diagnosis within the legislative office of the Committee Chair, Sen. Steve Nass (R-Whitewater). Sen. Nass has been one of the Legislature’s staunchest downplayers of Covid-19 and opponent of public safety measures; earlier this year he tried to rally his colleagues to sue the UW System for instituting various masking and/or testing requirements. What had been on the agenda for the canceled committee hearing? Three bills providing benefits or protections to employees who refuse to get vaccinated. Just a day or two after the hearing was canceled, Sen. Nass’s chief of staff was seen roaming the Capital without a mask. As I said, you can’t make this stuff up.



Evers Joins Governors from 16 Other States to Press U.S. Senate on Voting Rights; Biden Pushes, Too

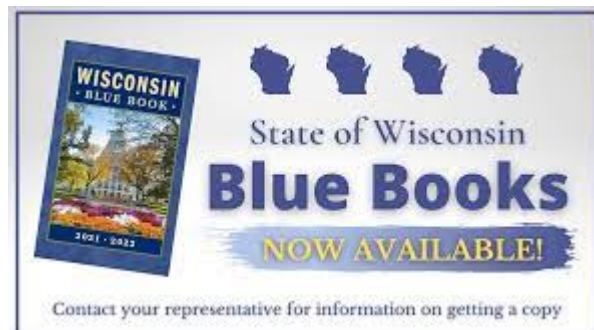
A coalition of Governors from 17 states, including Wisconsin’s Tony Evers, have written a letter to leadership in the U.S. Senate, urging passage of two bills aimed at the protection of voting rights. As a result of Republican obstruction, both bills would need 60 votes to overcome a filibuster. The bills, known as the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 and the Freedom to Vote Act, follow a wave of voter suppression efforts across the country. Legislators in 48 states – including Wisconsin – have introduced legislation that

would limit voting hours, restrict mail-in voting or reduce polling locations; at least 19 states have passed such legislation. At the same time, partisan gerrymandering is dominating the once-a-decade redistricting process in many states. Also this week, President Biden is putting additional emphasis on the passage of voting rights legislation, saying “there’s nothing domestically more important.”



KAFASI Seeking Volunteers for Home Repair Program

Kenosha Area Family and Aging Services, Inc. (KAFASI) is now managing the new Community Care Corps Home Repair Program. This program will provide lawn care, snow removal, and minor home repair free of charge to eligible seniors and people with disabilities living in their homes. The goal is to help them remain safely in their homes as long as possible. KAFASI is currently seeking volunteers to help provide these services. Interested parties can contact Mary Lundqvist of KAFASI at mlindqvist@kafasi.org or (262)658-3508.



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.