

July 15, 2022



Dear friends,

In 2009, the United Nations General Assembly declared July 18, the birthday of Nelson Mandela, as International Nelson Mandela Day, with the theme “Take action; inspire change”. In response, Mandela called on the citizens of the world to honor him by helping their communities. In 2022, the Nelson Mandela Foundation aims to highlight the plight of food insecurity and climate change, with the slogan, “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” A global movement for change begins with small actions. This July 18, honor Nelson Mandela’s wishes and do some good in your community.

Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bob



Clover Pup Salon Will Have Your Dogs Looking, Smelling and Feeling Their Best

Clover Pup Salon, 2908 Taylor Ave. in Racine, is a grooming facility for all breeds of dogs. Clover Pup aims to offer your four-legged friend a real salon experience, putting more than a decade in the industry into their work. Their talents will make this visit as low-stress as possible for your pet, making your dogs comfortable while they received services such as: bathing with high-quality shampoos and conditioners; tearless facials; shed –reducing treatments; nail clipping and buffing; ear plucking, cleaning and conditioning; brushing and dematting; exterior gland expression; classic, contemporary and custom cuts and styles; creative styling and accessories; and more. Clover Pup has received numerous honors, recognitions and accolades, including: Best of Racine County Pet Pampering Award in 2021 and Finalist in 2020 and 2019. Give their [website](#) and [Facebook](#) pages a look for more information.

In Case You Missed It



Wisconsin Supreme Court Permanently Bans Use of Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes
Trump Seizes on Ruling to Renew Call for Electoral College Decertification

On a 4-3 split decision, the conservative-controlled Wisconsin Supreme Court has ruled that the use of drop boxes for absentee ballots is illegal in the state and prohibited their use going forward. The ruling came just a month before the August 9 fall primary elections.

Following the ruling, former President Donald Trump took to social media to make the false claim that the decision invalidates all ballots cast by drop box in 2020 and to order Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) to “do something, for once, about this atrocity!” Trump has been pushing false election conspiracies since even before the 2020 election. Following Trump’s orders, and with Vos’s permission, Republicans in Wisconsin have continued wasting taxpayer dollars to search for any sign of fraud or misconduct. None of the allegations of fraud asserted by Trump or former Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman have been backed up by evidence, and Gableman’s investigation has cost Wisconsin taxpayers about \$1 million. The ruling on drop boxes means that voters will either have to return their absentee ballot through the mail or in person at their municipal clerk’s office.

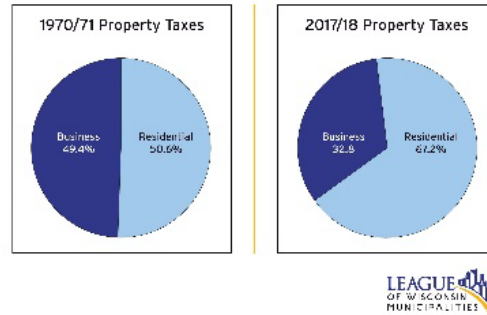


Wirch Named 2021-2022 “Conservation Champion”

Earlier this month, I was named a “Conservation Champion” by Wisconsin Conservation Voters, earning 100% score on their 2021-2022 session scorecard. I am truly honored to receive this designation. Conservation and protection of natural resources for future generations has always been a priority of mine, and Wisconsin Conservation Voters are tremendous fighters for our air, water, land and democracy.



The Big Shift to Homeowners



Wisconsin Supreme Court Could Settle “Dark Store” Issue Once and for All

For years, big box stores have utilized a loophole in the tax code allowing them to avoid paying millions of dollars in property taxes and shifting much of the tax burden further onto residential property owners. Using the so-called “Dark Store Loophole”, retailers claim that their stores are basically worthless at the point of sale, or worth no more than a “dark store” would be. They fill assessment appeal after appeal, trying to lower their tax burdens, and eventually either settle with the municipality or take the matter to court. Over the years, this loophole has cost Wisconsin municipalities, and eventually homeowners, millions of dollars, as big businesses lower their tax liability.

For a time, the idea of closing the “Dark Store Loophole” through legislative action had bipartisan support; after all, municipalities in both red and blue districts from all parts of the state are impacted. However, once the big business lobby Wisconsin Manufacturing & Commerce (WMC) got involved, Republican leadership killed the bipartisan bills. Now, the Wisconsin Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that could decisively settle the issue in Wisconsin. The case involves a lawsuit brought by Lowe’s against the City of Delafield. Delafield officials have assigned the Lowe’s store a value of \$8.9 million for tax purposes; Lowe’s has invoked the dark store loophole and filed suit to reduce its tax assessment to \$3.6 million. Lowe’s has lost at both the circuit court and appeals court levels and have now appealed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which has agreed to hear a dark store case for the first time.

Utilization of the Dark Store Loophole has led to a shift in the property tax burden from big businesses to homeowners. In 1970-71, residential property taxpayers were responsible for 50.6% of all property taxes collected in the state; by 2017-18, that had increased to 67.2%.



Kenosha Homecoming Car Show is Just Around the Corner

Come celebrate and explore Kenosha's 100 years of history in the automobile industry with the Kenosha Homecoming Car Show this July! Join with members of the Kenosha community, as well as visitors from all over the world, to share in the passion of car collection and see close to 1000 unique and interesting vehicles on display. The event will be held from July 26th to 31st at the Kenosha History Center as they highlight the legacy of the automobile industry in Kenosha and the mark it has left on the community. Visit [this website](#) to find out about the many events happening within the show, from ice cream socials to parades of the many interesting vehicles.



Governor Evers Awards \$1.4 Million in Grants to Coastal Communities

Governor Tony Evers has announced the recipients of more than \$1.4 million in grants to support economic development, protect Wisconsin shorelines, and create resiliency in Wisconsin's Great Lakes coastal communities. Local organizations and projects receiving grant awards include the City of Racine, which got \$75,000 to create a new public access point from the Lake Michigan Pathway/Zoo Beach Path to the Zoo Beach; the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC), getting \$20,000 to provide technical assistance, regional analysis and public outreach services to coastal communities; and the Village of

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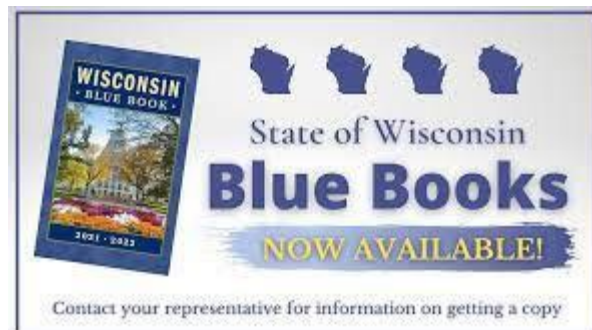
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Pleasant Prairie, receiving \$24,500 to complete engineering designs of “wave trippers” to be placed along the shoreline of Prairie Shores Park. The next Request for Proposals (RFP) for these grants will be available in August 2022, with an application deadline of early November 2022. Details are available [here](#).



EIGHT MORE Free Covid Tests Available

With Covid cases again on the rise, the Biden administration has is offering households eight additional at-home Covid tests, free of charge. You can order the eight tests at <https://www.covidtests.gov/>; you can also use this site to find nearby testing locations. The administration had previously made four at-home Covid tests available per household; you can still claim those using the same link if you haven’t already done so. Additionally, because of actions by President Biden and Governor Evers, your health insurance provider may be required to cover up to eight at-home rapid tests per month.



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.