

August 5, 2022



Dear friends,

**August is National Black Business Month. The concept started in 2004 in order to bring attention to the needs of the more than two million Black-owned businesses in this country. Black-owned businesses contribute about \$165 billion in revenue and more than 1 million jobs to the American economy each year. However, Black business owners and those looking to start a business face a number of unique challenges, including systemic inequalities that make it difficult to gain financial support. The Covid pandemic has heightened these struggles, and Black business owners were hit disproportionately hard. There are a number of ways you can recognize National Black Business Month: patronize your local Black-owned businesses; write and share favorable reviews of your favorites; share information on National Black Business Month and local Black-owned businesses on social media. Find more information [here](#) and [here](#).**

Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

*Bob*

# small business **SPOTLIGHT**



## ***New Racine HarborMarket Off to a Great Start***

Earlier this year, it was announced that Kenosha area attraction HarborMarket would be coming to downtown Racine this summer. After the first two days of operation, it is safe to say it's been a big success. The June 30 and July 28 market days have seen big crowds turnout to listen to live music and shop a number of food vendors. There are still two market days remaining this summer: August 25 and September 29 from 4:30 to 7:30 pm in Downtown Racine's Monument Square. August 25 will feature original and contemporary music by Rocky Rose, while Sept. 29 will host R&B group Family Affair. To find more information, including a list of vendors for the upcoming dates, visit <https://www.racineharbormarket.com/>.

## **In Case You Missed It**



## ***Wirch Office Hours This Saturday***

This Saturday, August 6, from 11 am to 12 pm, I'll be holding an "Office Hours" listening session in Activity Room A of Kenosha's Northside Library, 1500 27<sup>th</sup> Ave. Stop in to share your thoughts on the happenings in our state.



## ***Taxpayers on the Hook for an Additional \$163,000, as Judge Rules against Gableman in Open Records Case***

### ***Vos Feels the Heat as Trump Continues to Pressure Him on Social Media***

The bill Wisconsin taxpayers are paying for the Trump/Vos/Gableman “2020 election review” just got quite a bit bigger, as a judge ordered former state Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman to pay \$163,000 in legal fees in an open records case related to the “investigation”. The judge ruled that Gableman and the Office of Special Counsel that he leads violated state open records laws by not complying with requests for documents. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) hired Gableman last summer, with a \$676,000 contract, after caving to pressure from former President Donald Trump, who continues to make false claims that the 2020 election was rife with fraud. Gableman’s work has turned up no evidence of fraud and already exceeded its budget, but Vos chose to extend this contract indefinitely. Meanwhile, Trump is still not happy, as he continues to call out Vos by name on his social media accounts.



### ***Federal News Roundup***

- ***U.S. Senate Nears Deal to Lower Inflation, Protect Climate***
- ***Senate Republicans Block Veterans Healthcare Bill, Eventually Remove Objection***
- ***Ron Johnson Calls for Social Security, Medicare to Be Made “Discretionary”***

There has been a lot of big news out of the federal government in recent weeks, so it felt like a good time for a rundown.

Democrats in the U.S. Senate appear to have struck a deal with holdout Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia on what is being called the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. The bill includes several key provisions and major achievements: It will allow Medicare to negotiate with drug companies on the price of prescription drugs; \$433 billion to combat

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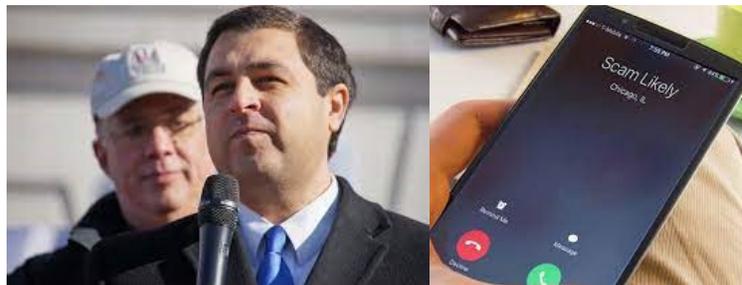
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climate change, including spending on clean energy and emission reduction; a deficit reduction of approximately \$300 billion; and close a tax loophole for Americans earning more than \$400,000 per year and large companies. Economists say that the bill would also create “downward pressure” on inflation.

U.S. Senate Republicans were furious after the deal was announced, and in retaliation, they blocked passage of a bill that would enhance health care and disability benefits for millions of veterans exposed to toxic burn bits. Wisconsin’s own Ron Johnson joined his Republican colleagues in voting against the bill. Following national outrage, including pressure from Jon Stewart, the bill passed the Senate this week on an 86-11 vote; all eleven “no” votes were Republicans.

Finally, on a right wing podcast this week, Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin) said that Social Security and Medicare spending should be made “discretionary”, meaning that it would have to be reauthorized by Congress every year. Currently, spending on these programs is mandatory and the programs don’t need reauthorization. Making the funding “discretionary” would set up a yearly fight to keep the programs going and endanger the incomes and healthcare coverage of millions of seniors and people living with disabilities.



### ***AG Kaul Joins Task Force to Fight Spam/Scam Calls***

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul has joined a nationwide Anti-Robocall Litigation Task Force to crack down on illegal spam and robocalls. Over 33 million scam robocalls are made to Americans every day, according to the National Consumer Law Center and Electronic Privacy Information Center. Approximately \$29.8 billion was stolen as a result of these calls in 2021 alone. While the task force does its work, Kaul has offered these tips to avoid and deal with unwanted calls:

- Be aware of callers who ask you to pay by gift card, wire transfer, or cryptocurrency;
  - Be wary of prerecorded calls posing as government agencies;
- If you suspect fraudulent activity, you should not provide any personal information and should immediately hang up;
- Contact the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) by email at [DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@Wisconsin.gov) or through a toll-free hotline at (800)422-7128;
  - File a Do Not Call or Text Complaint with DATCP. You can read more about the task force’s work [here](#).



## ***Governor Evers Declares August “ABLE to Save Month”***

Governor Tony Evers has declared August “ABLE to Save” Month in Wisconsin, as part of a nationwide campaign dedicated to increasing awareness about the benefits of Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts. ABLE accounts are tax-advantaged savings and investment accounts that allow qualified individuals and their families to save money and plan for their futures while maintaining their eligibility for federal public benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and Medicaid. Anyone can contribute to an ABLE account, including the account owner, friends, family, nonprofits and employers; funds can be used to pay for a wide range of expenses that assist the account owner in improving and maintaining their health, independence and quality of life. Wisconsin does not currently offer an ABLE plan; however, Wisconsin residents can open ABLE accounts in any state that accepts outside residents into their programs. You can find information on such states and more about ABLE accounts by visiting the [Wisconsin Department of Revenue’s ABLE accounts page](#) and the state [Department of Financial Institution’s ABLE accounts page](#).



## ***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>.



## ***BP Earnings Triple as Company Profits from Americans' Pain at the Pump***

BP tripled its earnings in the second quarter as the energy giant profited from high oil and natural gas prices that surged after Russia invaded Ukraine. The London-based company said that profits jumped from \$2.80 billion in the same period last year to \$8.45 billion this year.

This is one sign that gas prices were at least somewhat artificially inflated to boost oil companies' bottom lines.



## ***Racine to be Stop on New Electric Vehicle Multistate Tour Route***

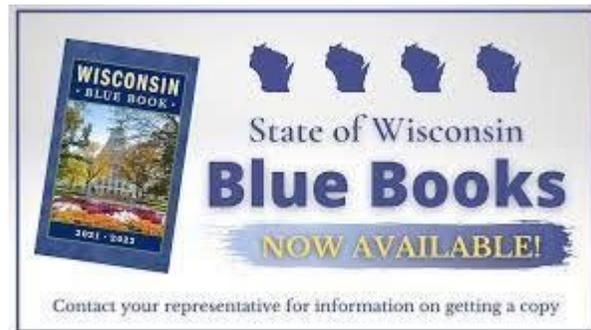
The City of Racine will serve as a stop on the newly-announced Lake Michigan Electric Vehicle (EV) Circuit Tour, a multi-state collaborative effort from Governor Evers and the Governors of Michigan, Illinois and Indiana. The purpose of the effort is to build America's next iconic road trip, this time designed specifically for electric vehicles. The Evers Administration aims to expand an existing network of charging locations to cover more than 350 miles of Wisconsin coastline on Lake Michigan. The goal is to build enough chargers at locations along the route to support roundtrip EV travel based on the number of annual tourists using the network. In all, the route will cover 1,100 miles around Lake Michigan. To learn more, go to <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/325c3ad>.



## **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](mailto:sen.wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov). These books are free and contain interesting and valuable information about our state's culture, history and government.