

**February 3, 2023**



**Dear friends,**

**February is American Heart Month, and February 3 is designated as National Wear Red Day to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke, particularly in women. This week, I joined a number my colleagues and legislative staff in a picture to show support for the American Heart Association and to kick off American Heart Month. Learn more about American Heart Month, as well as heart disease and stroke treatment and prevention, at [https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/american\\_heart\\_month.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/american_heart_month.htm).**

**Until next time, stay safe and healthy.**

**Sincerely,**

*Bob*

# small business **SPOTLIGHT**



## *911 Tacos Will Rescue You from Hunger*

Food trucks have become increasingly popular over the last few years, and one of the local favorites is 911 Tacos. Making stops throughout the Kenosha and Racine areas, you are never too far from satisfying your craving. 911 is more than just tacos. Their menu features various types of enchiladas, flautas, burritos, nachos, quesadillas and tostadas, as well. Be sure to check out their weekly schedule at <https://www.facebook.com/911tacos>.

## **In Case You Missed It**



## *February is Black History Month*

During National Black History Month, we celebrate the accomplishments and legacy of Black Americans and their central role in American history. February was originally selected as it is the birth month of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. The theme for 2023 is “Black Resistance”, which is meant to “explore how African Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms, especially the racial terrorism of lynching, racial pogroms and police killings” since the earliest days of our country. During this month, we honor the progress that has been made and acknowledge the challenges that remain.



## ***Kenosha's African-American Read-In This Saturday***

Kenosha's annual African-American Read-In will take place this Saturday, February 4, from 1 to 3 pm in Daimler Chrysler Hall at the Kenosha Public Museum. This year's event is being held in honor of Nancy Matthews, a longtime museum staff member and advocate for the African American Read In, who passed away in 2022.

The annual African-American Read In celebrates Black voices through poems, essays, short stories and children's books by African American authors. Volunteer readers of all ages, including Senator Wirch, will read selections and reflect on the Black experience in America.

Learn more about the event [here](#). Thank you to Adelene Greene and everyone who help organize and run this wonderful program.



*Sen. Wirch in Natural Resources Committee Hearing*



## ***Senate Natural Resources Committee Holds Hearing on "Forever Chemicals"***

This week, the Senate Natural Resources Committee, on which I serve, held an informational hearing on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as "forever chemicals". This represents progress, as in the past, Republicans have resisted attempts by Governor Evers and Democrats in the Legislature to address water contamination by PFAS. They seem to be

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coming around, though, as more and more communities – in both red and blue districts – are finding PFAS in their water supply. PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals used for their water- and stain-resistant qualities in things like clothes, carpets, nonstick cookware, packaging and firefighting foam. PFAS remain both in the environment and in the human body long term. The chemicals have been linked to some kidney and testicular cancers, lower birth weights, immune and reproductive system damage, problems with hormone regulation and altered thyroid hormones, and high blood pressure. PFAS have been found in drinking water in Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Peshtigo, the Town of Campbell, and other municipalities. During the hearing, Natural Resources Committee Chair Sen. Rob Cowles (R-Allouez) vowed, “There will be policy responses.” Governor Evers plans to propose a \$100 million investment in PFAS mitigation in the upcoming budget. Last session, I co-sponsored the CLEAR Act with my Democratic colleagues; the bill would have allowed DNR to determine PFAS standards, create remediation options for local governments, and punish bad actors.



## ***President Biden Introduces New Tenant Protections***

With rents soaring in many parts of the country, the Biden-Harris Administration has announced new executive actions to protect tenants called “The White House Blueprint for a Renters Bills of Rights”. The plan lays out new efforts by several federal agencies to fight on behalf of renters:

- The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will collect information on different factors that affect the rental market, such as tenant background checks, the use of algorithms in tenant screenings, and how applicant’s income source affects housing decisions to identify unfair practices in the market.
- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) will issue guidance to the FTC and coordinate enforcement efforts so that renters have accurate information in their credit reports.
- The Federal Housing Finance Agency will begin a public process to study placing limits on extreme rent increases at properties with federally-backed mortgages.
- The Department of Justice (DOJ) plans to evaluate anti-competitive information sharing in rental markets.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will propose a plan that requires public housing authorities and owners of rental assistance properties to give at least 30 days’ notice before terminating a lease due to nonpayment of rent.

The Blueprint also lays out the five principles guiding the federal government’s efforts to strengthen tenant protections and improve rental affordability. These principles are:

- Access to safe, quality and affordable housing;
  - Clear and fair leases;
- Federal, state and local governments must ensure renters are aware of their legal rights and protect renters from unlawful discrimination and exclusion;
- Renters should have the freedom to organize without obstruction from their housing provider or property manager;
- Access to eviction prevention and rent relief resources to avoid future housing instability.

Several private businesses have already signed on to help implement the Blueprint. For example, Realtor.com will be piloting a new listing process highlighting units and landlords that accept Housing Choice Voucher, making it easier for renters to search for apartments to apply for.

## ***Kenosha YMCA Talks Budget at the State Capitol***



*Sen. Wirch with Kenosha YMCA Executive Director Cindy Altergott; Board Member Katherine Marks; and Development Director Chris Finkel*



## ***Wirch Office Hours at Northside Library on Feb. 10***

On Friday, February 10, 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.

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## ***There Could Be Money out There with Your Name on it, Just Waiting to be Claimed***

February 1 marked National Unclaimed Property Day. In recognition, Wisconsin Department of Revenue Secretary – and Kenosha’s Own – Peter Barca joined other elected officials at the State Capitol to encourage people to search the DOR unclaimed property database (<https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/UnclaimedProperty/Home.aspx>) to see if they have any unclaimed property. Barca also stressed the importance of businesses holding unclaimed property to disclose it to DOR, so they can try to match it with its rightful owner. The National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators also maintains an unclaimed property website at [unclaimed.org](http://unclaimed.org).

Unclaimed property consists of money and other personal assets considered lost or abandoned when an owner cannot be located after a specified period of time. Common types of unclaimed property include but are not limited to checking accounts, certificates of deposit, life insurance policies, uncashed checks, death benefits, insurance payments, savings accounts, and safety deposit box contents. Statistics show a 1 in 7 chance that there’s unclaimed property with your name on it.



## ***State Consumer Protection Officials Name Top Complaints of 2022***

Every year, the state Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) releases of “Top Ten” lists of consumer complaints for the year. The 2022 list was just revealed and includes:

- 1) Landlord/Tenant Issues
- 2) Telemarketing
- 3) Home Improvement
- 4) Telecommunications
- 5) Identity Theft
- 6) Medical Services
- 7) Travel
- 8) Health and Medical Products
- 9) Furniture/Home Furnishings
- 10) Auto Sale

This represents a bit of a change from the last several years, which were dominated by telemarketing call complaints. In 2022, DATCP worked to resolve more than 11,000 consumer complaints, successfully reached settlements in several investigations, and returned millions of dollars to Wisconsin consumers.

For additional information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](https://www.consumerprotection.wi.gov). If you have questions or believe you have been the victim of a scam, report it by contacting DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline by phone at (800)422-7128 or email at [DATCPHotline@wi.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wi.gov).



## ***Covid Health Emergencies Ending in May; What Does that Mean for Your Family?***

President Joe Biden has said he plans to end the Covid-19 national and public health emergencies on May 11. This means that some Covid-related benefits will soon be changing, as well. Once the emergency ends, people will have to start paying for things that they previously didn't have to, such as Covid testing and certain labs work. Covid-19 vaccinations will still be administered at no additional cost to those with insurance. If you haven't been doing so, see the story below to stock up on no-cost Covid tests while they are still available.



## ***Wisconsin Families Can Get 5 Free Covid Tests Each Month***

Wisconsin residents can now get Covid-19 tests sent to them free of charge from the state. The [Say Yes! Covid Test website](#) is live and operational. The site allows households to order five rapid tests for free **each month**.

Households can still get up to eight rapid Covid tests per month through their insurance providers, as well.



## ***Take My 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>.