

**May 5, 2023**



**Dear friends,**

**May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the first full week of May (May 7-13) is Children's Mental Health Week. These are particularly important this year, as Governor Evers has declared 2023 the Year of Mental Health. His budget proposal contains a number of provisions aimed at improving access to mental health care for both children and adults. Mental illness and mental health conditions touch everyone in some way, but a stigma remains. If you are struggling, please talk to someone. If you think someone you love is struggling, check in and see how they are feeling. We can make a difference. Stay safe and healthy.**

**Sincerely,**

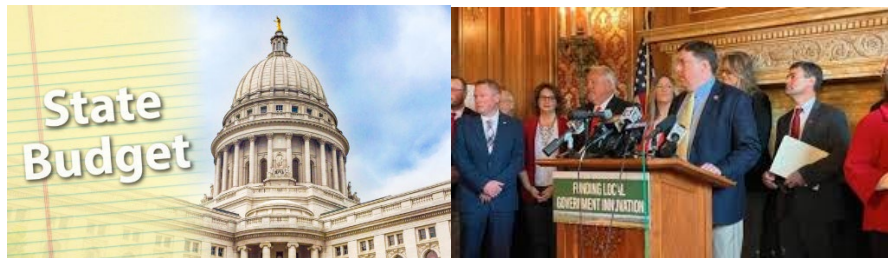
*Bob*



## ***Modern Apothecary Re-Opens in Larger Downtown Kenosha Storefront***

Independent Kenosha pharmacy Modern Apothecary has moved into a new Downtown location that provides them with more space. The new spot, 5700 Sixth Ave, is open from 9 am to 7 pm Monday through Friday, and 9 am to 2 pm on Saturdays. Modern Apothecary is owned and operated by pharmacist Erin Merritt; it offers traditional pharmacy services like prescription filling, vaccinations and consultations as well as natural, locally made products like soaps, candles and oils. Find out more at <https://www.modernapothecary.org/>.

## **In Case You Missed It**



## ***Finance Committee Takes First Budget Votes as Republicans Unveil Local Government Funding Plan***

This week, the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) met on both Tuesday and Thursday to begin crafting their version of the 2023 State Budget proposal. Budget votes got off to a discouraging start, as the Committee's Republican majority voted to strip out 545 items that Governor Evers had included in his proposal, such as paid family leave; BadgerCare expansion; automatic voter registration; a homeless veteran rental assistance program; a family caregiver tax credit; expansion of both the Earned Income Tax and Homestead Tax Credits; funds for mental health and suicide prevention programs; clean water initiatives; and much more. Also on Tuesday, Republicans released details on their plan to increase shared revenue to counties and municipalities. The plan would provide at least a 10% increase in shared revenue to towns, villages, cities and counties and allow the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County to ask voters to approve local sales tax increases to pay off their unfunded pension liabilities and avoid

bankruptcy. The additional money comes with strings attached, however. In both the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County, any future budget action would require a 2/3 vote of their governing body (City Council, County Board), rather than a simple majority; Milwaukee Public Schools would have to accept 25 school resource officers at schools throughout the district; and the way members of Milwaukee's Police and Fire Commission would be altered, among other new requirements. Statewide, the bill prohibits local advisory referendums, such as those many communities have held in recent years on fair maps, BadgerCare expansion, legalized marijuana, and, in Kenosha, the casino project. Communities would also be held to a new "maintenance of effort" requirement for public safety, meaning the percentage of their total budgets they spend on public safety can never dip below current levels without penalty. It remains to be seen if Republicans have the votes to pass the bill in its current form. It is likely that some changes will be made to the bill, as Republicans in the Assembly and Senate work out their differences, and Governor Evers said on Thursday he will likely veto the bill if it passes in its current form. You can read the text of the bill as currently written at <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab245>. You will find a Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo on the bill's shared revenue provisions at <https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/230502LFB.pdf>.



## ***Former Kenosha County Exec Kreuser Appointed to UW Board of Regents***

Kenosha's Jim Kreuser, former County Executive and Assembly Minority Leader, has been appointed by Governor Tony Evers to serve on the UW System Board of Regents. Kreuser will serve a seven-year term ending in 2030. The Board of Regents has 18 members and sets policy and rules for UW System schools, approves member schools' budgets, sets admissions standards, and grants tenure to faculty members.



## ***Immigrant Rights Activists March to the Capitol While Finance Committee Strips Immigrant Protections from State Budget***

Immigrant rights advocates marched to the State Capitol on Tuesday and held a protest as the Republican majority on the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) voted to strip out 545 provisions from Governor Tony Evers's budget proposal, including drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants.



## ***Kurklis Wins 2023 Connie Reyes Award for Child Advocacy***

Kim Kurklis, retired Early Childhood Special Education Diagnostician for KUSD, has received the 2023 Connie Reyes Award for Excellence in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention. The award is named in honor of Connie Reyes, a Kenosha County social worker who worked with families that had dealt with child abuse and neglect; Reyes was murdered in 1990 by a woman who had lost her three children due to neglect and abuse, along with her accomplices. Kim Kurklis worked in child abuse and neglect prevention for nearly 40 years. She is a native of Kenosha.



## ***Showing Appreciation for Our Teachers***

No matter how hard we try, we can never thank teachers enough for all that they do to help our children grow and develop. Tuesday, May 2, was National Teacher Appreciation Day. The National Education Association (NEA) describes National Teacher Appreciation Day as "a day

for honoring teachers and recognizing the lasting contributions they make to our lives.” National Teacher Appreciation Day might have passed, but we should still take the time to show the teachers in our lives how much they mean to us.



## ***Wisconsin Families Can Now Get Ten (10) Free Covid Tests Each Month***

Wisconsin residents can now get up to 10 free Covid-19 testing kits sent straight to their doors each month as part of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ Say Yes! Covid Test Program. Since starting in September 2022, the [Say Yes! Covid Test](#) program has delivered more than 1.6 million free test kits throughout Wisconsin. Households were previously limited to one free test kit (5 tests) per month but can now receive two, containing 10 tests. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has extended the shelf life for several Covid tests, including iHealth, which are delivered through the Say Yes! Covid Test program; tests are now good for up to one year. To order the test kits online, visit [sayyescovidhometest.org](http://sayyescovidhometest.org).

Those without reliable internet access or who have questions about ordering can dial 211 or 877-947-2211 for assistance. **THIS PROGRAM IS LIKELY TO GO AWAY IN MAY, WHEN THE COVID HEALTH EMERGENCY ENDS.**



## ***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>.