

August 25, 2023



Dear friends,

On this day in 1916, the National Park Service was created, making today its 107th birthday. On that day, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the National Park Services Organic Act, which created the NPS, which it called “a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 35 national parks and monuments then managed by the department and those yet to be established.” Today the NPS manages more than 400 “National Park Sites”, a designation that includes national parks, national monuments, national historic sites, national recreation areas and more, in all 50 states; they see more than 300 million visitors per year and employ about 20,000 people. Fun fact: America’s national parks are larger than 170 of the 234 nations in the world. If you haven’t done so before, make it a point to visit a national park. You won’t be disappointed.

Sincerely,

Bob

small business **SPOTLIGHT**



The Daily Dose Café: Serving Up Award-Winning Food in a Friendly Atmosphere

Since opening its doors in 2007, Kenosha's Daily Dose Café has served up delicious homemade breakfast and lunch options in a friendly, homey atmosphere. Owner Jennifer Capponi left her corporate job to open the Daily Dose and hasn't looked back. Check them out at

<http://www.dailydosecafe.net/>.

In Case You Missed It



Office Hours TODAY

Today, Friday, August 25, from 1 to 2 pm, I'll be holding an "Office Hours" listening session in Activity Room A of Kenosha's Northside Library, 1500 27th Ave. Stop in to share your thoughts on the happenings in our state.



Parkside Considering Furloughs, other Moves to Address Budget Shortfall

On Monday, the UW System and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside announced that the school is considering furloughs of all staff and other measures to address a \$5.3 million structural deficit. The news created sadness, anger and fear amongst Parkside staff, the

extended Parkside family and the entire community. Earlier this month, UW-Oshkosh announced that it was cutting 200 staff positions as a result of an \$18 million deficit, and UW-Platteville on Monday announced it was also considering furloughs due to its \$9.7 million budget shortfall.

While UW System schools have almost all had to deal with declining enrollments, these budget deficits and the resulting cuts were entirely preventable. During deliberations on the 2023-2025 state budget earlier this year, UW System President Jay Rothman warned that without sufficient state investment, many of its member schools would face cuts and possibly even campus closures. State support for the UW System has steadily declined, especially since 2011, when Republicans took complete control of state government. Add to that a decade long tuition freeze; a mandate from the Republican majority that schools spend down their reserve funds; and the declining enrollments accelerated by Covid, and the result is that 10 out of the 13 UW System schools are facing structural deficits in the millions of dollars each.

While Governor Evers proposed a \$300 million increase in state support for the UW System, the Republican majority instead cut \$32 million, telling the system it needed to cut diversity, equity and inclusion efforts before the funding will be restored. For years, the Republican majority has used the state budget to either cut or underfund the UW System. A recent report from the nonpartisan Wisconsin Policy Forum found that Wisconsin ranks 43rd out of 50 states in terms of per-student state support for higher education. Under Republican Governor Tommy Thompson, state General Purpose Revenue made up half of the UW System's budget; as of the 2021-2023 state budget that number was less than 18%.



Republicans Introduce Bill Eliminating Child Work Permits

There's a current trend among Republicans across the country to weaken child labor laws. In the last year, Republican Governors in Iowa, Arkansas and New Hampshire have signed into law legislation doing away with certain labor protections for minors. Republicans in many more states – including Wisconsin – have pending legislation doing away with child labor laws.

During the last two legislative sessions, the Republican majority in the Wisconsin State Legislature have pushed bills to extend the hours that minors under 16 are allowed to work on school nights and to allow minors 14 and up to serve alcohol; the former was passed on party-line votes but vetoed by Governor Evers. Previously, under Scott Walker, they eliminated work

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

Printed on Recycled Paper

permits 16 and 17 year olds, as well as limits on the number of hours and days 16 and 17 year olds can work. Now, they've taken the next step, introducing legislation to eliminate child work permits completely. Republicans say these measures are needed due to labor market shortages, but we shouldn't and can't solve that problem on the backs of our children. Child labor laws were enacted to protect children; in many cases, business owners desire more underage employees, who will accept a lower wage and are less likely to know their rights or push for better working conditions.

Just this year, we have seen examples from right here in Wisconsin of why we not only need to keep our current child labor laws on the books but we need to actually strengthen those protections. In July, the owner of four Milwaukee-area restaurants was cited by the U.S. Department of Labor for a number of violations, including violations of child labor laws. These violations included requiring 14 and 15 year olds to work past 9 pm and for more than 8 hours at a time when they have school the next day. In February, the federal Labor Department reported that more than 100 children were working illegally for Packers Sanitation Services across eight states, including Wisconsin. The children were sometimes working overnight shifts and were working with hazardous chemicals and dangerous meat processing equipment. Also in July, a 16 year old boy in Florence County was killed while working his job at Florence Hardwoods. The boy was working alone in the building while a supervisor operated a forklift outside. Surveillance footage showed the boy stepping onto a conveyor belt to unjam a machine. He did not press the machine's safety shut off button, and he wasn't found until 17 minutes later.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, child labor law violations are up 70% since 2018. The DOL data also shows Wisconsin with more child labor violations than any of our neighboring states, averaging about 99 per year since 2018.



Municipalities Suffering from PFAS Contamination File Suit against Polluters

The City of Eau Claire and residents of the Town of Stella have filed lawsuits against manufacturers they assert are responsible for PFAS contamination in their drinking water. In a news release announcing its suit, the City of Eau Claire stated that PFAS have been found in the city's wells and groundwater, requiring the city to shut down half of its wells and begin planning for substantial improvements to its water treatment systems. According to the release, the City has already spent \$1 million responding to PFAS contamination and estimates the costs could rise above \$20 million. The Eau Claire suit names more than 30 manufacturers as defendants, including DuPont and 3M.

The Stella suit was brought by 3 couples who live in the town and listed 3M and a Rhinelander papermill as defendants. The suit contends that waste spread on farm fields in Oneida County

by the defendants contained PFAS and caused unsafe levels of PFAS in private wells. The suit also alleges that 3M knew that PFAS chemicals were toxic as early as the 1970s and had actually documented increasing levels of the chemicals in the bodies of 3M employees that were suspected to cause birth defects in children of employees.

Last year, Governor Tony Evers and Attorney General Josh Kaul brought a suit against 3M, DuPont, Tyco Fire Products, Chemguard and other companies for actions resulting in PFAS contamination. Hundreds of communities across the country have sued 3M and other chemical companies for pollution of their public water supplies, including Wausau, La Crosse and Dane County.



Kenosha Schools Recognized for Student Performance and Participation in AP Courses

Two Kenosha schools have been recognized by the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for high participation and achievement on Advanced Placement courses. Lakeview Technology Academy was named a “Level 1” Pacesetter, meaning 30% or more of all students participated in at least one AP exam, and 70% or more of those students earned scores of 3 or above on the exams. Indian Trail High School and Academy, meanwhile, was cited as a “Level 3” Pacesetter; to qualify, a school must have more than 10% of all students participating in at least one AP exam, and 60% or more of those students must have earned scores of 3 or above on the exams. Congratulations to the staff, students and families of both schools for this honor.



Ready Wisconsin Offers Back to School Safety Tips

Ready Wisconsin, the state’s information hub for emergency and disaster preparedness information, has released a set of tips to help parents, teachers and students start the school year off on a safe note.

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

Printed on Recycled Paper

“Kids spend a lot of time away from home during the school year, so it’s important that they know what to do if there’s an emergency during the day. Parents should spend some time going over how to respond to those situations, so kids can start the year safely,” said Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator Greg Engle.

Ready Wisconsin encourages families to take the following steps with their students to help give them the tools needed for the new school year:

- Create an emergency communications plan, which lists the phone numbers of parents, along with members of a student’s extended family or close friends to serve as backup contacts. Make sure a copy of that plan is available at school and in your student’s backpack. You can find a sample emergency communications plan at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/make-a-plan>.
- If cell phones are allowed at school, program them with emergency contact numbers.
- Review safety information shared by your school, including school bus safety, evacuation procedures, and how students will be reunited with families if there were to be an emergency or other incident during the school day.
- Talk to your student’s teacher about participating in Ready Wisconsin’s Student Tools for Emergency Planning (STEP) program. This free curriculum for fourth and fifth grade classrooms helps teach students about being ready for disasters. Educators can find enrollment information at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/step/>.
- If you have a student heading off to college, consider picking up an emergency kit for their vehicle, dorm room and/or apartment. Vehicle kits should include items like a cell phone charger, snacks, blankets and jumper cables. For home kits, add items like non-perishable foods, a flashlight, portable radio and extra batteries.

For more tips about talking to your kids about safety, go to <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/>.