



SCOTT FITZGERALD

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2015

Contact: Scott Fitzgerald, 608-266-5660

NOTE: This column is being submitted by Sen. Scott Fitzgerald for your consideration to print.

Senator Fitzgerald: Public Input Crucial to Budget Passage

This week, the Wisconsin Legislature took up and passed the 2015-17 Biennial Budget after months of public hearings, debate, and deliberation. While there is no doubt that this was a difficult budget, it was also a responsible one; one that we can be proud of. By making some tough financial decisions, we ensured that the interests of Wisconsin's taxpayers were protected. We refused to raise sales, income or property taxes. We undertook long awaited, meaningful reforms to Wisconsin's antiquated prevailing wage law which artificially inflated the cost of taxpayer-funded projects to the tune of hundreds of millions annually. These changes will translate to real relief for Wisconsin's hardworking taxpayers.

One of the greatest challenges that we faced this budget cycle was tackling the persistent struggle of funding our state's infrastructure with less and less available revenue. This is not a problem unique to Wisconsin, but an issue facing states across the nation as Federal highway dollars dwindle and more fuel efficient vehicles result in less revenue from gas taxes. This year, Wisconsin's voters took a huge step in addressing this problem in the long term by approving a constitutional amendment to protect Wisconsin's transportation fund. In this budget, we looked towards the future by refusing to allow our state's transportation borrowing to swell to unmanageable levels, and made difficult decisions to ensure that we continue to foster the development of infrastructure—but not at the expense of maxing out the state's credit card.

Equally important, we ensured that we continued to invest in our priorities, fully funding K-12 education in the first year of the biennium and allocating an additional \$100 per pupil to our schools in the second year. We reduced the proposed cut to the University of Wisconsin System and created new flexibilities to allow one of our state's greatest institution to be reactive to this and future financial challenges.

Throughout this budget process, we have listened to and implemented the valuable feedback we received from our constituents. We protected the programs that Wisconsin's most vulnerable populations rely on, including SeniorCare, FamilyCare, and the Wisconsin Retirement System. We heard the concerns of the constituents who called, wrote, and emailed our offices and removed some of the most contentious and unpopular provisions from this budget while adding other items that were widely called for. The extensive public input we received played a significant role in shaping the document that we sent to the Governor's desk, and I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every constituent who got involved in this budget process along the way.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) represents the 13th Senate District, which covers portions of Dodge, Jefferson, Waukesha, Washington, Dane, and Columbia counties.

STATE CAPITOL

P.O. Box 7882 • MADISON, WISCONSIN 53707-7882 • SEN.FITZGERALD@LEGIS.WISCONSIN.GOV

TELEPHONE: (608) 266-5660