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SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Milwaukee Arena Deal Saves Bucks for Wisconsin

This week, the Wisconsin Legislature finalized the approval of a bipartisan proposal to provide public financing for portions of a new sports and entertainment venue in Milwaukee's Park East Corridor. With input from legislative leaders from both sides of the aisle, representatives of the city and county, and members of the Bucks organization, this plan saw a dramatic transformation from the original version introduced in the executive budget; I believe that the resulting proposal is a good deal for the city of Milwaukee and a good deal for the State of Wisconsin.

This plan is not only about the Bucks, and it is not only about Milwaukee. I have long said that as goes the City of Milwaukee, so goes the state. This proposal takes advantage of the rare opportunity to leverage a massive private investment and ensures that the important economic engine that is the Bucks franchise continues to have a home in Wisconsin. Construction on the new arena will employ thousands of workers, and when the project is completed, this venue will be the center of a vibrant sports and entertainment district that will create permanent jobs in the area and spur tourism from players and fans from across the nation. This represents much needed economic growth in a previously underdeveloped area of Milwaukee, and the positive impact will be felt far outside the city limits. In fact, for every dollar the state invests in the arena, two dollars of economic growth will be created.

Perhaps most importantly, this proposal ensures that Wisconsin's taxpayers are protected, limiting the state contribution to \$80 million over 20 years—far less than the plan presented in the original executive budget. The bulk of the cost will be picked up by the Bucks owners, and a significant share will be provided by locals, who will enjoy the most benefit from the new facility. The inclusion of a small ticket surcharge ensures that those who will be utilizing the new arena will contribute to its costs. Further, this legislation guarantees that taxpayers are not on the hook for any additional future costs, and mandates that if the Bucks leave, they will have to pay back the public investment.

Finally, this proposal is simply the best deal for statewide taxpayers. Bucks players currently generate \$6.5 million in income tax revenue annually, a figure that is only expected to grow. If the team leaves, not only will the state lose all of this revenue, but taxpayers will then still be on the hook for the deferred maintenance costs of the Bradley Center. By contributing only \$4 million per year, the state retains the income taxes generated by the Bucks players, and ensures that after 20 years the state share will be paid off, and the government will be out of the arena-owning business for good.

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

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