

The Sargent Voice

Representative Melissa Sargent

48th Assembly District

Issue 23

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

With snow on the ground and a chill in the air, it's clear that winter has officially arrived. While the legislative session has ended until early 2014, my office has been busy introducing legislation, reaching out to constituents, and ensuring that the 48th Assembly District is well represented in the State Capitol.

This issue of the Sargent Voice will discuss my bill to allow counties to accept the federal Medicaid expansion funds, my continued effort to support our local fast food workers, and opportunities for people to give charitably this holiday season.

As always, if you have any items you would like included in the Sargent Voice, or if you have questions about state government please contact my office at Rep.Sargent@legis.wi.gov or call 608-266-0960.

Sincerely,

Melissa

Counties Medicaid Bill

This week, I introduced legislation which would allow Wisconsin counties to accept enhanced federal Medicaid funds if their local government has voted in support of receiving the federal dollars. Simply put, under this bill, if a county board passes a resolution to accept the federal funds, DHS must assist them in filing for a waiver from the federal government.

Gov. Walker and the Republicans caused this health care crisis by rejecting federal money. Accepting it would save taxpayers money and give more people access to healthcare. Our state could cover 85,000 more people and save \$86 million in this biennium alone by expanding BadgerCare by accepting federal resources.

I call on my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to honor local control by supporting this bill which allows the government closest to its citizens the opportunity to provide health care opportunities.

Charitable Giving Options

To get in the spirit of the holiday season, I hope people will consider giving to one of these fantastic charities in our community. While our gifts to each other make the season fun, there are those with less in society who could greatly benefit from even a small donation.

Kennedy Heights Community Center

In 2012 the Kennedy Heights Community Center refocused their efforts to strengthening entire families because a strong community starts with the families in it. The Community Center offers many resources for adults and children, and they rely upon donations to keep their programs running. If you would like to donate please go to www.khcommunitycenter.org

Porchlight, Inc.

Porchlight is centered around provided shelter for the homeless members of our communities. Since its inception, it has provided more than 780,000 nights of shelter and more than two million meals. This organization is looking for donations in order to extend the services they offer. Please visit www.porchlightinc.org

Domestic Abuse Intervention Services

This organization relies on donations in order to help people in our communities that have either suffered, are suffering, or fear that they will suffer from domestic abuse. Your donation is an investment in the safety and future of domestic violence survivors across Dane County. Please visit www.abuseintervention.org

Operation Fresh Start

Engaging youth in conservation work in Dane County for over eighty years, Operation Fresh Start aims to give our young ones the skills and knowledge to keep our environment growing and healthy. Please visit www.operationfreshstart.org

Rock River Coalition

The Rock River Coalition monitors 68 streams throughout the Rock River Basin through the Stream Monitor Program and are working to ways to increase involvement and understanding of streams through education. This coalition relies solely on donations from concerned Wisconsinites. Please visit www.rockrivercoalition.org

Community Groundworks

Educating community families about healthy, hand grown food is the main goal of this nature based organization. In 2013 alone Community Groundworks has produced 3,685 pounds of produce, all stemming from donations. Please visit www.communitygroundworks.org

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

The mission for the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation is to provide support for historic places that enrich the city; "We believe that a city's identity and sense of place are closely tied to its multi-generational places and architecture." Please visit www.madisonpreservation.org

Workers' Rights Center, Inc.

The Workers' Rights Center works to educate and maintain the rights of workers in the Madison area. Please visit www.wrcmadison.org

Fair Wisconsin Education Fund

Fair Wisconsin Education Fund works to build a fair and inclusive Wisconsin for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people by advancing, achieving, and protecting LGBT civil rights and workplace equality through education, movement capacity building, grassroots organizing, civic engagement, research, and legal challenge preparation. To give to this organization please visit www.fairwisconsineducationfund.com

Fast Food Walk Out

Along with many community leaders, I have continued to advocate for the fast food workers in our area. Last week, workers at the Taco Bell on East Washington Avenue walked off the job in protest of their low wages.

I have urged these corporations to raise the wages of their workers to afford them a higher standard of living. Raising the minimum wage would also save the taxpayers money. The statistics in regards to the fast food industry tell the story:

- More than half of the families of front line fast food workers are enrolled in one or more public assistance program.
- Nationally, the cost of public assistance to families of workers in the fast food industry is nearly \$7 billion per year.
- McDonald's alone costs taxpayers an estimated \$1.2 billion.
- In Wisconsin alone, the public cost of low-wage fast food jobs is \$166 million.
- The 10 largest fast-food companies alone made more than \$7.4 billion in profits in 2012.
- They also awarded more than \$53 million in compensation to their highest paid executives.

The fast food industry is making these profits, and these bonuses on the backs of the hard working men and women who are on the front lines working for them.

I implore these corporations to pay these workers a living wage. A \$15 per/hour ladder into the middle class will have wide a reaching positive impact on our society.

Affordable Care Act Press Conference

I was pleased to join citizens and other community leaders came last Friday to tell the stories of how real people in Wisconsin are now able to get affordable health care coverage. With two weeks until the deadline to enroll for January coverage, two young people from Wisconsin spoke about how the Affordable Care Act is benefiting them.

The event was held at the Dane County Job Center, where counselors have been meeting with and walking people through enrollment.

As President Obama has said about the Affordable Care Act time and time again, young people need to sign up in order for this law to be successful. We, here in Dane County are lucky to have groups like our local OFA teams such as the Northside Action Team who are passionate about successful implementation of the Affordable Care Act. There is some positive momentum happening right now with this law, and I know we are moving in the right direction towards more people having affordable, accessible health care in the United States.

We have a Governor here in Wisconsin who has refused to accept federal Medicaid money which would have insured 85,000 more Wisconsinites and saved millions in taxpayer dollars. Despite these issues we are facing, we need to celebrate the great strides towards providing affordable insurance for the people of our state and country." Ms. Hall concluded, "I do believe that it's in the best interests of society that I be able to contribute to the economy with a reasonable premium and not be at risk of bankruptcy because of an accident or sudden illness. If you set the politics aside, it just makes good economic sense for everyone to be covered.

UW Women's Rights Forum

I had a great discussion last Wednesday at the UW Madison / Young Progressives Women's Rights Forum.

I was inspired by the engaged students who presented with passion and determination to make their voices heard. I know that these leaders for our next generation will continue to push for women's health care access as well as equality in the work place and all of society.

Stat of the Week

Wisconsin vs. Minnesota on Health Care

- **In Minnesota, where the governor accepted funds to strengthen Medicaid and created a state-specific exchange, rates are significantly lower than what Wisconsinites are paying.**
- A study shows Wisconsin rates were 25 to 35% higher than in Minnesota and much higher than average for all states. In some plans, Wisconsin's average cost was nearly double Minnesota.
- Example: 50-year-old Minnesotan who lives just south of the Twin Cities can buy a mid-level, silver plan for \$241/month while across the border, a Wisconsinite of the same profile pays \$622 for a comparable plan.

These statistics are not intended to disparage Wisconsin. It is the state I grew up in, and the state I love.

However, we continually see Minnesota making choices that benefit its citizens, while Wisconsin has fallen behind in so many categories. It is not too late for Wisconsin to turn things around. In regards to health care, we can still take the federal dollars afforded to us under the Affordable Care Act. It does not sunset. We could take the money now, or years from now.

Making the correct policy decisions, both fiscally and for the well-being of Wisconsinites, should always be the guiding principle over any ideological viewpoint.

In the Capitol: Holiday Tree

I encourage everyone to come down to the State Capitol this holiday season to enjoy the beautiful tree that was put up in the rotunda last week.

The tree features ornaments made by school children across Wisconsin. Ornaments were submitted from 152 schools across the state.

Quote of the Week

The world mourns the loss of Nelson Mandela this week. His contributions to all humankind will be remembered for generations to come.

"We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right."

-Nelson Mandela

Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Madison

City of Madison officials received confirmation of the presence of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) on the north side of Madison near Warner Park. As a result, Dane County will be quarantined. The quarantine prohibits some wood products from being moved out of the county to areas that are not infested.

Madison Parks Forestry officials received a call from a private tree company reporting suspected EAB infestation in a tree they were removing on private property near Warner Park. The Madison Parks forestry staff investigated the site and surrounding areas. Forestry staff sent in the evidence to the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection. Confirmation of EAB was received Friday, November 22, 2013.

The City of Madison has an estimated 21,700 publicly owned street (terrace) ash trees, and unknown number of ash trees in parks and thousands more on private property. In the Warner Park area where EAB is confirmed, there are over 2600 publicly-owned ash trees.

The following is a summary of the City's plans for public trees is based off the approved EAB Plan:

Madison Parks Forestry will continue to do branch sampling in the Warner Park area to find the 'epi-center' of the infestation.

Over the winter, Forestry staff will remove publicly owned ash trees (street and park trees) that are in poor condition and/or are located under power lines.

In the spring the city will implement a chemical treatment program for trees that are in healthy condition and over 10 inches diameter. The city will use the injection treatments versus soil drench treatments to ensure the protection of ground and surface water quality.

Madison Parks Forestry will provide an "Adopt-a-Tree" program for private citizens to help save, at their own expense, a publicly owned ash tree in a Madison park.

Madison Parks Forestry will continue with branch sampling in all areas of the city to look for any other infestation locations.

Going forward, Madison Parks Forestry will replant publicly-owned trees in most locations.

What can Homeowners do about their own privately owned trees?

Keep a close watch on ash trees for signs of possible EAB infestation: thinning canopy, D-shaped holes in the bark, new branches sprouting low on the trunk, cracked bark and woodpeckers pulling at the bark to get to insect larvae beneath it.

Call a Certified Arborist for expert advice.

If you are considering preventative treatment, the city of Madison encourages you to use the injection method rather than the soil drench method in order to protect our lakes and ground water.

In the District

Ice Skating Season is Here!

Once the ice rinks are open, a favorite outdoor winter activity is ice skating. What's better than taking the kids out for a day of ice skating - and then enjoying a cup of hot cocoa?

Madison Parks has several parks with outdoor ice rinks: Vilas, Goodman, Rennebohm, Elver, Nakoma, Heritage Heights, Tenney, Olbrich, Westmorland, Wexford, and Warner. For skate rentals and concessions, visit Tenney, Vilas and Elver Parks. For the winter 2013-2014 season, there is a new ice rink!

Madison Parks will offer ice skating at Odana Hills Golf Course on one of the retention ponds. Once the facility is open for the season, ice skate rentals will be also be available in the Odana Hill clubhouse on the weekends from 8:30a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Tours of the Governor's Mansion

The Governor's office announced the 2013 holiday tour schedule for the Executive Residence. Tours will provide guests with a view of the main rooms on the first floor and a brief description of the decorations, including uniquely decorated Christmas trees.

There are two dates remaining:

Thursday, December 12: Noon - 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 14: 9 a.m. - Noon

There is no charge for admission, but all tour participants are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items and/or new or gently used winter gear, including mittens, hats, scarves, earmuffs, coats, sweaters, jackets or snow pants which will be donated to those in need.

The Executive Residence is located at 99 Cambridge Road on Madison's northeast side in the Village of Maple Bluff. Groups of 20 or more may make a reservation by calling 608-246-5501. The Executive Residence is handicapped accessible.