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SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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LeMahieu: “The State of the State is not as strong as it should be.” *“Tony Evers’ veto pen is holding Wisconsin back.”*

MADISON –This evening, Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) issued the Republican Response to Governor Evers’ State of the State Address. His full response is here:

“Good Evening. I’m Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu here to give the Republican Response to the Governor’s State of the State Address.

The unfortunate reality is, our nation, our state, and our people have been in the midst of crisis—facing historic challenges—and the executive branch at every level of government has failed to effectively lead us through it. As a result, the state of our state is not as strong as it should be.

Ask yourself: have Joe Biden or Tony Evers, done anything to make your life better? Or has just about everything they’ve touched gotten worse? Runaway inflation, rising crime, closed schools, supply chain disruptions, restrictive COVID rules that no longer make sense...

The Legislature has shielded our state from many of the damaging effects of both the current national climate and past state fiscal mismanagement. Over the last decade, we’ve turned a \$3.6 billion deficit into a \$3.8 billion surplus, grew our state’s emergency fund from ZERO to \$1.7 billion, and lowered the tax burden on our residents at the fastest rate in the nation—a cumulative savings of more than \$13 billion.

All while we funded core priorities, spent within our means, and returned surpluses back to taxpayers. We’ve created an environment in which individuals and businesses can thrive.

But despite being in better financial shape than many other states, Wisconsin is nowhere near where we want it to be. Nearly every other aspect of our lives has declined in quality because of Joe Biden’s disastrous policies and Tony Evers’ weak leadership.

During times of crisis, we need strong leaders to act decisively...leaders who cast a bold vision and—most importantly—deliver on that vision to the benefit of everyone.
That is where Governor Evers has failed Wisconsin, time and again.

During the unemployment surge in the wake of the shutdown orders, Governor Evers left thousands of desperate families without help for months. He delayed action and people suffered as a result.

When Kenosha was burning, night after night, and rioters destroyed businesses and livelihoods, Governor Evers fanned the flames with incendiary statements. He allowed entire city blocks to burn while he waited and waited to act. That is not the strong leadership Wisconsin needs.

Now, as the Waukesha Parade massacre is still fresh in our minds, Governor Evers is doing nothing to hold repeat offenders or DA John Chisholm accountable. The soft-on-crime bail policies plaguing our state have put car thefts and murders in Milwaukee on pace to break records. Governor Evers refuses to act while people around the state suffer. That is not the strong leadership Wisconsin needs.

Kids and parents have struggled mightily to deal with repeated school closures and lost learning over these past two years. It's gotten so bad that nearly 60 percent of 4th graders in Wisconsin can't read proficiently at grade level. Parents are demanding better from their schools, but Governor Evers has called our parental empowerment bills 'radical' and pledged to veto them—keeping kids in failing schools and keeping parents at arms-length.

Unfortunately, when Governor Evers does choose to act on an issue, he almost always gets it completely wrong.

The Governor acted decisively when he unilaterally shut down the Wisconsin economy, declaring hundreds of main street employers "non-essential". He picked winners and losers and devastated our small business community—far too many small businesses were forced to permanently close. The lasting damage can still be felt around the state. Thankfully, the Legislature intervened and helped reopen our economy before more damage was done.

Now, Tony Evers' COVID response centers on handing out giant, cardboard checks using the federal tax dollars borrowed against our kids and grandkids' futures. He promised to "get the money out the door" as quickly as possible but, now nine months later, he still has nearly a Billion dollars left in his Madison bank account.

Every one of those giant checks Evers poses with this fall represents the outrageous over-spending of the federal government which rained down fifty-eight billion dollars into Wisconsin. The printing and borrowing of new money has caused inflation to spike to a new 40-year high.

Tony Evers' two budget proposals have been disasters as well. Each of his budgets included massive new tax increases on top of nearly 10% growth in government spending. His most recent budget, which was riddled with liberal policies, included a billion dollar tax increase and wild over-spending that would have jeopardized our state's financial future.

Wisely, we rejected both of his unrealistic budgets.

The Legislature put forward our ideas, objectives, and priorities in a way that aligned with the values of the people of Wisconsin with smart investments in healthcare, transportation, and education. We built bipartisan consensus. We led with purpose, conviction, and a strong sense of where our state needed to go.

Ultimately, Governor Evers abandoned his own unrealistic budgets and followed our lead by signing our responsible budgets. We provided the strong leadership Wisconsin needed. And Governor Evers followed.

If not for the Legislature's leadership, Governor Evers could have sunk our economy or ruined our opportunity to implement our most recent \$3 billion tax cut which equates to a savings of \$1,200 for the typical family.

Our Republican Tax Cut blunted the impact of rising inflation on family budgets and has helped our state stay on the right track despite the current economic turmoil.

That is the type of strong leadership Wisconsin needs right now.

We know that our state is only as strong as our people and that is why our solutions center on empowering individuals and families. We have put forward legislative solutions to every major problem facing our state.

Our “Stronger Workforce Initiative” would help guide 50,000 people back into the workforce and our “Supporting Law Enforcement Package” would help get more cops on the streets to make Wisconsin safer. Governor Evers should follow our lead and signs these bills.

Our legislation Empowering Parents to be more involved in education expands school choice, increases curriculum transparency, and institutes a “Parental Bill of Rights” that puts parents in the driver’s seat of their children’s education. Governor Evers should listen to parents, follow our lead, and sign these bills.

We have worked tirelessly to address the terrible abuses to our election system committed under the cover of COVID. The public’s confidence in our system has been shaken by Ballot Harvesting, Drop Boxes, Zuckerbucks, and the lawlessness of some at the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

Governor Evers has vetoed our previous attempts to fix the known problems in our election administration. We now have the recommendations from the nonpartisan Audit Bureau and will put the legislative fixes on Governor Evers’ desk yet again. We will give him a second chance to do the right thing and adopt these non-partisan recommendations to rebuild confidence in our elections. Unfortunately, he has already pledged to reject them.

The problems facing our state continue to fester because of Tony Evers’ veto pen.

Unfortunately, the State of our State is not as strong as it should be.

However, the Legislature has proven time and again that we know how to move Wisconsin in the right direction despite Evers’ veto pen holding our state back.

We will continue to lead with smart budgeting and bold reforms that strengthen our state’s farmers, manufacturers, and main street businesses—they are the backbone of our Wisconsin economy. We will continue to address the workforce crisis, rising crime, and inflated cost of living with clear solutions that align with Wisconsin values.

We know that strong families and determined individuals are the solution to our state and nation’s problems, not more government programs or mandates. Empowering individuals and families is the only way to restore our state and nation to what it should be.

We will continue to listen and lead. And we will ensure that Wisconsin’s best and most prosperous days lie ahead. May God Bless the great state of Wisconsin.

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Senator Devin LeMahieu represents the 9th Senate District, which includes portions of Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Calumet Counties. He serves as Majority Leader for the Wisconsin State Senate.