



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

January 9, 2020

Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald
Room 211 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos
Room 217 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Minority Leader Gordon Hintz
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Legislative Leaders:

Greetings and happy new year. I hope the past few weeks provided the opportunity for you to spend time with your families and that you had an enjoyable holiday season. Now that we are heading into the new year, I look forward to setting politics aside and getting to work for the people of our state.

Last year, Republicans in the Assembly sent [a letter](#) outlining Republican priorities for the legislative session. While I recognize the letter was not sent from both houses, I know Majority Leader Fitzgerald and other Republicans in the Senate have signaled support for many of these priorities. In light of the new year, I wanted to reflect on some of the priorities Republicans set out last year on which we were able to make significant progress:

- **Income tax reductions**
 - I was excited that we worked together to deliver on my campaign promise for a 10-percent tax cut for Wisconsin's working families. The People's Budget, together with 2019 Wisconsin Act 10 which was passed with bipartisan support, provided more than \$500 million in overall tax relief for working, middle-class families.
- **Enhancing high speed internet access**
 - I was proud to sign Senate Bill 239—now 2019 Wisconsin Act 14—another bipartisan bill that will allow our state to catch up with the rest of the Midwest by allowing 5G cellular technology here in Wisconsin.
 - Additionally, The People's Budget provided \$48 million over the biennium for broadband expansion grants—more than twice as much as has been awarded in all previous years combined—and our first broadband grants round announced last year was the largest in state history, totaling \$24 million.

- **Support for K-12 education**
 - I've always said what's best for our kids is what's best for our state. The People's Budget invested more than \$500 million in K-12 education, and I exercised my broad veto authority to add nearly \$100 million more in per pupil aid than the budget sent to my desk. Additionally, we were able to secure both the largest increase in general aid to Wisconsin schools as well as the first increase in special education funding in a decade.
- **Addressing the debt level in our transportation fund**
 - I said we would bring everyone to the table to work on a sustainable solution to our transportation funding crisis, and that is what we did. The budget we passed included \$465 million in new funding for our highways, local roads, and transit aids—\$320 million of which is going to highway rehabilitation across our state—while keeping bonding at the lowest level in twenty years.
- **Investments in our infrastructure**
 - Despite initial partisan roadblocks, we were able to make significant investments in building projects across the state in our final capital budget, including more than \$400 million for facility maintenance and repair, needed renovations, and conservation improvements across all state agencies.

While we were able to accomplish many important things this past year, none of us got everything we wanted: Republicans passed bills on a party-line vote that I ultimately vetoed; Democrats were disappointed the budget I ultimately signed and improved through partial vetoes did not invest as much in our public schools and special education, clean water, and healthcare as the budget I originally proposed; Republicans and Democrats alike have bills that remain in legislative limbo despite having broad, bipartisan support.

In the new year, I hope we can all agree that although we had some successes this past year, there is a lot we can do when we all work together, and there is still plenty to do before the end of the legislative session. Thus, while I hope you had the chance to relax over the holidays, I also hope you are recharged and ready to work together in earnest to get things done for the people of our state.

As you know, I am a teacher-turned-governor, so to that end, I am assigning the legislature some homework to complete before adjourning later this year. The assignment begins with the issues that a majority of people in our state support and on which I think we should be able to agree. The following is a list of proposals already introduced in the legislature and awaiting passage that I am hopeful will be passed in the spirit of bipartisanship by the end of the legislative session:

- **AB 411/SB 340**
 - This legislation caps the price of insulin at \$100 for a 30-day supply. Modeled on legislation recently passed in Colorado, this bill protects the tens of thousands of Wisconsinites whose lives depend on insulin from price gouging.

- **AB 146/SB 130**
 - We can start lowering the property tax burden for Wisconsinites by closing the “dark store” loophole to ensure everyone pays their fair share. This bill has broad, bipartisan and local government support and a version of this was removed from The People’s Budget last year. AB 146/SB 130 closes the “dark store” loophole, a tax mechanism used by large retailers to avoid taxes by forcing municipalities to include the value of vacant properties in tax assessments.

- **AB 321/SB 302**
 - This legislation, known as the CLEAR Act, directs the Department of Natural Resources to establish and enforce standards for per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS are industrial chemicals commonly found in non-stick products, stains and paints, cleaning products, and firefighting foams that are estimated to be present in the blood of 98 percent of the United States population, and are being detected in our environment, including many relevant detections in Wisconsin water.

- **AB 41 and AB 34/SB 46**
 - Both of these bipartisan bills address several key issues relating to sex trafficking in Wisconsin. Vulnerable kids in our state can be forced into commercial sex practices and can be prosecuted for the crime of prostitution. AB 41, introduced by Reps. Billings and Steineke and Sens. Darling and Johnson, prohibits this practice if the person is under the age of 18, and should be passed as a clean bill in both houses. Additionally, AB 34/SB 46, introduced by Sens. Jacque, Wanggaard, and Taylor and Rep. Brandtjen, imposes a mandatory \$5,000 surcharge on those convicted of patronizing or soliciting a prostitute or keeping a place of prostitution.

- **AB 358/SB 332 and AB 214/SB 200**
 - These bills are also bipartisan and address the tracking, processing, and storage of sexual assault kits. AB 358/SB 332, introduced by Reps. Thiesfeldt and Taylor, and Sens. Darling and Schachtner, creates the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System allowing sexual assault survivors to check the status of their sexual assault kit. AB 214/SB 200, introduced by Reps. Steffen, Sargent, Macco, Thiesfeldt, and Taylor, and Sens. Cowles, Schachtner, and Darling, establishes a statutory procedure for collecting and processing sexual assault kits. This legislation will help prevent future sexual assault kit backlogs and ensure justice for sexual assault survivors.

- **AB 119/SB 122, AB 120/SB 145, AB 121/SB 120, AB 122/SB 124, AB 123/SB 119, AB 124/SB 144, AB 125/SB 121**
 - This bipartisan package of legislation provides increased investments to address homelessness in Wisconsin. Initially allocated as part of the budget, this money has been repeatedly roadblocked in the Legislature. With winter well underway, these resources must be released as quickly as possible.

- **AB 64/SB 71**
 - This bill is also bipartisan and supported by local governments across our state. The expenses associated with unexpected special elections too often burden local governments that are already strapped for resources. AB 64/SB 71 reimburses local municipalities for costs incurred administering special elections. With the 7th Congressional District special election happening in the coming months, the legislature should act expeditiously, and pass AB 64/SB 71 so local governments can be reimbursed for the cost of the election.

In addition to the above legislation, I believe there is great opportunity for Republicans and Democrats to work across the aisle to introduce bipartisan bills on several important issues such as bills ensuring the investigation of cases of sexual assault and harassment in the Wisconsin National Guard, preventing surprise medical billing, bringing Wisconsin's special election law into compliance with federal law, helping Wisconsin's agricultural industry and our farmers, investing in clean water and water quality, and increasing funding for mental health services in our schools, among other important priorities.

Certainly, the above list is not exhaustive, and I will be announcing additional priorities in the weeks and months ahead. I understand that Republicans have signaled the legislature will meet just a few times before concluding the 2019-2020 legislative session early for the remainder of the year. Given the many opportunities we have to work together on the pressing issues facing our state, I am hopeful that the legislature will remain in session as long as is necessary to accomplish these important goals. It would be unfortunate if the legislature were to adjourn without making meaningful progress on the issues Wisconsinites care about.

The people of Wisconsin elected us to show up and get to work, so I look forward to working with you in the new year to continue moving Wisconsin forward, together.

Sincerely,



Tony Evers
Governor

cc: Members of the Legislature