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State Senator
9th State Senate District

Capitol Connection
By Senator Joe Leibham

~ Helping Law Enforcement Keep Our Communities Safe ~

Over the past couple of months, I have helped organize three separate Law Enforcement Roundtable discussions in Sheboygan, Manitowoc and Calumet Counties. The special guest at each session was our state's Attorney General JB Van Hollen. The goal of each session was to allow law enforcement personnel from each county to ask questions and raise issues with the Attorney General and discuss legislative matters with me.

Each of the events was well attended and proved to be beneficial to all who participated. Numerous issues including the DNA backlog, changes to the preliminary hearing process, video conferencing options, OWI issues, the police and fire protection fee, and many others were discussed and various ideas were shared. I appreciate that Attorney General Van Hollen participated in each of the sessions and took interest in listening to and dialoging with our area law enforcement personnel and public leaders. Public safety and the proper enforcement of our laws are two key issues and it is helpful when the state's top law enforcement officer is out actively listening to and assisting those in the field.



As a result of these meetings and others, I am currently working on three legislative proposals that could help our law enforcement officers do their duty.

First, I have authored Senate Bill (SB) 59, which allows a law enforcement officer to seize as an item of forfeiture a computer or electronic device that is used with the knowledge and consent of its owner in the commission of a crime. The forfeited computer or electronic device may be retained by the law enforcement agency for its use, donated to a nonprofit organization or another government agency, or sold with 50% of the proceeds of the sale being retained by the agency and the remaining proceeds being deposited in the common school fund. The goal of the legislation is to ensure that the computer or device used to commit a crime isn't returned to the criminal so they can use it again and again.

I am also working to draft legislation that would allow all types of law enforcement officials to conduct search and seizure procedures on individuals who are out of jail on probation or parole. While a number of other states allow all types of law enforcement officers to directly deal with individuals on probation and parole, currently in Wisconsin there is a question as to who is allowed to conduct this type of search and seizure. In some instances, law enforcement officers must contact the individual's specific parole officer in order to conduct these types of procedures. I am working with area law enforcement officers to draft legislation that will break down this barrier and clarify the law on this matter. By empowering all law enforcement personnel we will assist our probation officers greatly by

increasing the oversight of individuals who are living in our communities but are on probation and parole.

Finally, I have also authored SB 82, which would make it easier for police and sheriffs departments to hire qualified law enforcement officers. Currently, employers are generally not required to provide a local law enforcement agency with past employment information about an employee who applies to work in a local police force. SB 82 would require employers to make work histories available for inspection to law enforcement agencies upon a request authorized by the district attorney. Under this proposal, the agency may also obtain a court order for the release of the records if the employer does not comply initially with a proper request. Exceptions are made for confidentiality agreements, existing court orders, out-of-state employers and government employees. It is important for a law enforcement agency to have this information available to them as they seek to employ people who must maintain the public trust.

While I believe these legislative proposals will assist our law enforcement officials, it is important to remember that we as individual citizens play an important role in keeping our neighborhoods and communities safe. We all need to pay attention and get involved. As such, I encourage everyone to attend Manitowoc County's Crime Prevention Day on October 24, 2009 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Manitowoc County Expo Grounds. As always there will be informative displays and demonstrations about a variety of crime prevention techniques, an expired pharmaceutical drug collection, musical entertainment, and many other events for both children and adults. I have attended this event every year and I look forward visiting with you on Saturday the 24th.

As always, it has been a pleasure communicating with you. Please remember to communicate with me and share your input by calling 888-295-8750, writing to me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882, or by e-mailing me at Sen.Leibham@legis.wi.gov. You can also log on to the 9th Senate District on-line office at www.leibhamsenate.com.

It is an honor representing the residents of the 9th District in the State Senate.