
Capitol Connection

By Senator Joe Leibham

~ Senate Democrats Defeat Budget Amendments ~

As you may know, on Wednesday, June 17, the Democrats in the State Senate approved their version of the 2009-11 state budget on a 17-16 vote. All fifteen Republicans and one Democrat voted against the plan. Based upon the overwhelming input I have received from my constituents, I confidently voted “no” on the overall Senate package. Without a doubt, this budget is totally disconnected from the priorities of average Wisconsinites.

I was pleased to co-sponsor over 30 amendments to the Democrats’ budget plan. Each amendment was rooted in the input I have received from constituents throughout the entire budget process and, in my view, would have made the document better and more reflective of Wisconsin citizens’ current priorities.

Unfortunately, every single one of our amendments was defeated by Senate Democrats. While I am frustrated with the entire process, I was most disappointed that the Democrats killed the following amendments:

- **Eliminate all non-fiscal policy** – This amendment would have eliminated each of the 80 proposed policy items that were tucked into the fiscal budget plan. Policy items such as unionizing in-home health care workers, taxpayer-funded health and retirement benefits for same-sex and live-in partners of state employees, major insurance changes and the redefinition of agricultural land do not belong in a budget bill. Each of these issues should be debated and voted on as separate bills.
- **Eliminate all earmarks** – This amendment would have eliminated over \$38 million in projects requested by individual legislators for their districts. Typically, these provisions are called “pork” because they are used to win the votes of legislators who may be leaning against the budget. Just a few examples of this years “pork projects” are new recycling bins in Wrightstown (\$46,000), a public shooting range in Eau Claire (\$50,000), an Environmental Education Learning Center in Racine (\$25,000) and an opera house in Oshkosh (\$500,000).
- **Job creation incentive** – Modeled after a similar program in Kentucky, this amendment would allow an entrepreneur looking to grow, relocate or retain at least 15 jobs in Wisconsin to keep a portion of the new individual income tax revenue generated as a result of those jobs for five years. The business could use this funding to support worker training, equipment upgrades or facility expansions. This was the only pro-job amendment offered and I was pleased to offer it based on a suggestion from a Sheboygan-based business that wants to grow their job base and keep their business operating in Wisconsin. The proposal would actually be a fiscal gain because of the financial benefits of keeping jobs and the income tax paid on them in our state.
- **Kiel roundabout construction delay** – This amendment would have delayed the construction of two roundabouts and related road improvements on Highway 67 in the City of Kiel, which would have saved the state \$2.3 million. There is little justification for this project at this time, especially considering the fact that we are dealing with a \$6 billion deficit. All unnecessary spending should be stopped. This money could have been spent on a higher priority transportation project or, better yet, not spent at all.



To view some of my efforts from the floor of the State Senate, please visit my web site at www.leibhamsenate.com and click on the video links at the bottom of the page.

The Democrats in the Senate and Assembly who currently control the budget process now need to work out the differences between their two proposals. This compromise plan is then sent back to the full Senate and Assembly for a straight up or down vote. Finally, the legislatively-approved budget will go to the desk of Governor Doyle for his potential veto or signature.

Unless major changes are made, I plan to vote against the budget. Again, from both a fiscal and policy standpoint, I believe it is totally disconnected from the average, hard-working and responsible citizens of our state. I look forward to updating you as the process moves forward and continuing my uphill fight against this bad budget.

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.