

Rep. Chris Taylor's Capitol Update 6-12-2015

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MADISON - While the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) did not meet this week to finish working on Governor Walker's 2015-17 state budget, both the Assembly and Senate were in session on Tuesday. Below you will find a summary of our legislative action.

It is expected that JFC will reconvene next week to take up the outstanding state budget issues including taxes/revenue, transportation and the proposed Milwaukee Bucks arena. Once the JFC finishes their work on the state budget it will go to the Legislature, where each house will have to pass the same version of the bill before June 30 (the end of the fiscal year).

The unfortunate reality is that this budget hurts the people of our state and doesn't reflect the priorities of the people, which include investing in our public education systems and our children.

GOP Eliminate 48 Hour Waiting Period for Handguns

In 1976, the Wisconsin Legislature passed legislation that would require a "cooling off" period between the purchase and delivery of a handgun. Governor Patrick Lucey proudly signed the bill into law, stating the bill was designed "to help prevent crimes committed in a moment of passion or fit of rage that so often result in senseless tragedies among family or friends." Not only does current law protect victims of domestic abuse, but it protects individuals who are contemplating committing suicide.

While I strongly spoke out against repealing the 48 hour waiting period, I also spoke out in favor of closing the "gun shop loophole" and requiring background checks on all purchases of guns, including at gun shows or private sales. A 2012 survey by a Republican pollster showed that 82 percent of gun owners - including 74 percent of NRA members - supported background checks for all gun sales. Some of the lowest female homicide rates in the country are found in states where background checks are required for all purchases. If we want to reduce the epidemic of gun violence, we need background checks for all gun purchases. I will keep advocating for commonsense gun safety measures.

Clean Air Regulations

While most of us have gas furnaces, there are still families across Wisconsin that use wood heaters. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure associated with these heaters to serious health problems including irregular heartbeats, nonfatal heart attacks, aggravated asthma and decreased lung function.

On Tuesday, the Assembly passed Assembly Bill 25 which forbids Wisconsin's DNR from promulgating a rule or enforcing new federal standards for wood burning appliances. I voted against this proposal because having clean air and water should be one of our most important objectives. We should allow the DNR and the EPA, the experts on these issues, to do their jobs. Republicans seem to continue to disregard science in promulgating these harmful policies.

Last-Minute Vote Ends SAGE Program As We Know It

For years, schools across Wisconsin have participated in the Student Achievement Guarantee Program (known as SAGE) that provides additional aid to schools with the understanding that they maintain an 18-1 or 30-2 student-to-teacher ratio. We all can agree that smaller classrooms with manageable class sizes provide our educators and our children with the best chance for success.

As Republicans continue to siphon off hundreds of millions of dollars from our public schools to support private schools or provide corporate welfare to campaign donors, class sizes have begun to balloon and districts will look for any additional funding possible to keep their doors open. Tuesday's bill essentially ends SAGE as we know it by eliminating the requirement that districts maintain SAGE classroom ratios to collect aid. Don't let the GOP rhetoric fool you, this is a bill that is not in the best interests of our school children.

20-Week Abortion Ban Passes State Senate

As many of you can recall, last week I updated you on the status of the 20-week abortion ban that was passed out of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services on a party-line vote. On Tuesday, the State Senate passed this dangerous bill on a party-line vote. The debate raged on for several hours and despite the medical community's vocal opposition to this ban, which threatens women's health and lives, Republicans passed the legislation without blinking an eye. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has not indicated whether the Assembly will take this legislation up for a vote, but if we do, I promise you I will be ready!

As always, if you would like more information on any of these issues or have questions on any other legislative issue, please do not hesitate to contact my office directly at 608-266-5342 or via email at Rep.Taylor@legis.wi.gov.

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