

Budget Vote This Week: Rhetoric or What's Right

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The Senate is scheduled to vote on the budget this week. Sen. Smith reviews Governor Evers' budget proposals and the many changes in the version passed by the Joint Finance Committee.

MADISON, WI - Two weeks ago, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) passed their version of the state budget 12 to 4, along party lines. The full Senate scheduled a vote this week on the budget, a vote that may demonstrate the true callousness of politics in our state.

The first thing Governor Tony Evers did after winning his election last fall was go to the people to develop the budget. The first thing Republicans did with the Governor's budget was throw it away.

It's the job of party leaders to use their talking points. Republicans and Democrats will always have sharp differences on how to govern, but we can all agree how democracy should work.

The majority of voters chose Governor Tony Evers. He campaigned on Medicaid expansion to help 82,000 more citizens afford healthcare. As a legislator, I am duty bound to consider how to make what you want and voted for a reality.



When voters elected our top-public school official as Governor, they were looking for leadership and a vision for fixing the failing school funding formula. We ought to take Governor Evers' proposals for public education and special education funding seriously. We heard what you wanted in the gubernatorial election and I continue to hear your opinions every day in Madison and out in the 31st Senate District.

The budget we'll be voting on isn't what the people voted for last fall. Republican leaders discarded the creative investments in the Peoples' Budget and replaced them with stale and unimaginative ideas.

We'll be asked to vote on a budget that abandons the will of the people in so many ways.

1. The Republican budget rejects full Medicaid expansion. Did Republicans forget they already partially accepted Medicaid in 2013? Why not join the 37 other states that already fully accepted Medicaid? It would free up \$325 million more to spend on other priorities. It would lower health insurance premiums up to 11% in the private market.

2. The Republican budget doesn't do enough for people who drink lead-contaminated water everyday by rejecting Governor Evers' proposal to replace lead service lines. Urban and rural communities are struggling with budget constraints, so now is the time for Wisconsin legislators to step up and ensure our children aren't being poisoned by the water they drink.

3. Republicans refused to acknowledge the potential for groundwater contamination from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) by rejecting Governor Evers' plan to raise permit fees to pay for more CAFO inspections.

4. The Republican transportation plan rejects Governor Evers modest eight-cents per gallon increase and slams Wisconsin drivers with tax hikes by more than doubling the titling fee and increasing registration fees by \$10. That means Wisconsin drivers will squarely take the hit for funding our roads instead of collecting gas tax from out-of-state drivers. Why? Because Republicans can't increase "taxes," but they are okay with hammering only Wisconsin drivers with excessive fees.

5. Shocking to some, Republicans rejected Governor Evers' plan to scale back tax breaks for rich manufacturers to give middle class taxpayers a break. After tossing out the Governor's

plan to give middle class families \$236 a year, Republicans bragged about protecting millionaires and giving middle class families only \$136 a year.



The list could go on, but I think it's clear. The Legislature is missing a great opportunity to really make an impact on our lives. Just remember there was an alternative the next time you hit that massive pothole on your way to work, you get that health insurance bill or when your drinking water becomes contaminated. All for the sake of politics. When thinking about which political Party is "out of touch," consider the struggles within your own community and the choices made in Madison.

Republicans had eight years to get it right thanks to gerrymandering. They've become complacent and they ignored the basic needs of families and communities. Over 175 times, they've taken away local decision making. And consider what we could be doing if we just listened to people, followed the basic principles of democracy and worked together as true leaders, representing the citizens of our great state.

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