

Sen. Smith: I'm Here, Ready to Listen

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 04 March 2020 15:37 -



Over the next couple of weeks, Sen. Jeff Smith will be hosting a series of listening sessions to hear from the people of the 31st. and hopes you can join them.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - I've always said that one of the best parts of my job is listening to others, whether it's their stories, suggestions or questions. During this time of year, I regularly hear many of the same questions.

What happened? Where did the time go? Why didn't things get done? What can we expect?

These are all important questions, questions Wisconsinites deserve to ask, especially as the legislative session comes to a close. I hope to have the opportunity to answer these and your other pressing questions during my end-of-session listening sessions.

As always, the best part of listening is learning. I learn a lot from folks who come to the listening sessions, and I hope I'm able to share insightful information for others to learn from as well.

Last week, I held the first end-of-session town hall listening session in Whitehall at Sweet Temptations Cafe. More than a dozen constituents sat with me to ask questions and start a

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discussion. The topics of conversation ranged from the broken school funding formula, broadband expansion, gerrymandering and the urgency of repairing our crumbling rural roads to Managed Forest Land.

Our conversation on these interesting and important issues could have gone on for hours. Although the topics are relatively different, the answers I come back to are typically the same. When we talk about being unable to expand Medicaid or properly fund our public schools, the conclusion rests on the decisions made by the Majority Party or the consequences of gerrymandered maps.

For example, when Governor Evers presented a plan to provide property tax relief for Wisconsinites while recommitting the state to two-thirds funding of our public schools, Republicans declined to even have a discussion, instead opting for a one-time property tax rebate.

After listening to the hardworking educators in the area, I knew the importance of Governor Evers' plan. I support Governor Evers' plan because it's the plan my constituents have advocated for to support our rural communities in more ways than one. I'm continuing to listen and learn from residents across the state on the best ways to lead and collaborate with my legislative colleagues.



I want to make myself available to learn more from you. In the following weeks, I'm holding these upcoming end-of-session listening sessions:

- March 5 (5:30 PM – 7:00 PM) – Chippewa Valley Technical College Room 101 in the Business Education Center, Eau Claire with Representative Jodi Emerson
- March 10 (5:00 PM – 6:30 PM) – Revolution Coffee, Black River Falls

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- March 12 (4:30 PM – 6:00 PM) – The Twisted Oak Coffee House, Prescott
- March 26 (5:30 PM – 7:00 PM) – Roger Marten Community Center, Mondovi
- April 2 (5:30 PM – 7:00 PM) – Cochrane-Fountain City High School, Fountain City

With the last session day happening the last week of March, this is a chance for you to share your thoughts on what the legislature still needs to accomplish and your ideas about what we could be doing better for the next session in 2021.

But don't think this is the end of my work for 2020. Along with holding scheduled listening sessions like these, I'll be getting back out on the road for my mobile office hours with my truck and Stop N' Talk sign.

The conversations and action we take in 2020 will, undoubtedly, have an impact on how we work in 2021. We don't get any more free passes to complain if we don't demonstrate our duty to stand up, participate and fight for the best interests of Wisconsinites. Be sure to show up to listening sessions and share your thoughts. Make your voice heard loud and clear.