

Republican State of Obliviousness and Ignorance

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 31 January 2024 07:07

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/wi-senate-swearing-in-s448.jpg>



Sen. Smith chides Republicans for attempting to save their members from redistricting and putting forward another variation of a tax cut plan for the wealthy while the Chippewa Valley struggles with the recent health system closure.

MADISON - We all have that friend who is completely unaware of their surroundings. That's called obliviousness. In politics, obliviousness may affect one politician, but it's called ignorance when the entire membership of the political party refuses to acknowledge an issue.

While Governor Tony Evers was putting the finishing touches on his State of the State speech for Tuesday night, Republicans were launching their state of obliviousness and ignorance.



Republicans regurgitated another plan to shell out our state surplus as tax breaks for the

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wealthy on Tuesday morning. The front page of the Eau Claire Leader Telegram on Wednesday last week was a perfect depiction of obliviousness. Area Republicans are pictured smiling and boasting about tax cuts for the wealthy while our community reels from the tragic news of the HSHS closure announcement just the day before. This is the perfect illustration of the Republican plan. While people suffer and look for answers, Republicans are more interested in their own agenda. There was time for local elected officials to cancel their press conference, but they refused.

The next day, the Governor suggested that Medicaid expansion could've helped. There's no doubt there was an impact with a high percentage of Medicaid recipients served by HSHS. But, no one will ever know because Republicans have continually buried their heads in the sand and rejected \$1.6 billion from the federal government to fully expand Medicaid like 41 other states have already done. For 10 years, Republicans have refused to do it because of political ideology. I've said it before and I'll say it again – continually refusing to fully expand Medicaid is illogical, immoral and fiscally irresponsible.



I was one of the last to know about the HSHS closures. During a 15 minute "briefing" we were told they were leaving on April 21st. After hearing the news, I couldn't help but remember the days my children were delivered at Sacred Heart Hospital. I've always been proud of the fact that my daughters were born in the same hospital as I was. Almost everyone in our community probably felt the same way.

Whether it was ourselves or one of the people we love, HSHS has served our community over multiple generations. I felt a sense of loss and frustration while also trying to wrap my head around what this rapid departure from our community will mean for families. While some may be angry or others might be sad, I find myself feeling both emotions.

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Further disappointment came when I received a call from my office telling me I needed to rush down to Madison to vote on something. I didn't know what it was. I couldn't help but hope that Republicans had finally come around to restoring the right to have an abortion in Wisconsin, or maybe we would be doing something to help our community after the HSHS announcement. Instead, I learned it was just another attempt by Republicans to cling to their power with another gerrymandering bill. I had a long three-hour drive to Madison. You can certainly understand my anger. Republicans refused to give us details until we went to the senate floor on Tuesday. That's when I learned that the real reason I was rushed down to Madison was so Republicans could attempt to save eight Republican legislators from redistricting.

It's shameful and unacceptable. If Republicans invested a fraction of their time solving problems that they spend toward clinging to power and dishing out tax dollars to their wealthy friends, they wouldn't be governing from a state of obliviousness and ignorance. I am exhausted by it and voters should be as well.

I hope last week was a wakeup call for our area legislators to put down the microphone for their own pet political ideology and pick up the phone to listen to the people who sent them to Madison to work on issues that matter.

Senator Smith represents District 31 in the Wisconsin State Senate. The 31st Senate District includes all of Buffalo, Pepin and Trempealeau counties and portions of Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson and St. Croix counties.