

State Capitol Update – Week of May 18-22 Votes “Under the Dome”

Written by Jennifer Shilling, State Senator 32nd District

Friday, 22 May 2015 12:21 - Last Updated Friday, 22 May 2015 12:31



MADISON - This update for the week of May 18-22, 2015 is being provided to help keep citizens informed about important decisions happening at the State Capitol and to stay updated on how elected officials are voting on key issues in Madison.

Joint Finance Committee votes - May 19th and 21st

The Joint Finance Committee met on May 19th and 21st to continue voting on provisions of Governor Walker's proposed 2015-17 State Budget. For a list of JFC committee members, [click here](#)

Opioid Addiction Treatment Pilot Program - Dept. of Corrections(Motion #448)

Summary: The Governor proposed spending \$836,700 on an opioid addiction treatment pilot program within the state prison system. Opioids are narcotics that can be legally prescribed, such as morphine or Oxycontin, or illegal, such as heroin. The pilot program would provide monthly treatment injection and drug testing for 100 offenders.

How they voted: The committee approved the funding and the pilot program with a slight modification on a bi-partisan 16-0 vote.

K-12 School Funding and Private Voucher School Expansion (Motions #438 & #457)

Summary: Republicans and Democrats offered vastly different K-12 school funding proposals for the committee to consider.

- The minority-party Democrats offered a motion to restore public school funding and provide an additional \$300 per student, increase rural school funding by \$5 million, increase special education funding by \$20 million and eliminate the proposed voucher school statewide expansion.

How they voted: The Democrats' motion was rejected on a party-line vote of 4-12.

- The majority-party Republicans offered a motion that restored the \$150 per pupil cut proposed by Gov. Walker, expanded the taxpayer-funded private school voucher program and increased per pupil subsidies for voucher schools which will divert an additional \$48 million from public schools.

How they voted: The Republicans' motion was adopted on a party-line vote of 12-4.

Following passage of the Republican school funding plan, a spokesperson representing the [Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance](#) issued the following statement:

“Clearly, this is the best education budget that millions of dollars in largely out-of-state political contributions can buy. And it didn’t seem to bother majority Republicans one bit that this voucher expansion will drive up local property taxes.”

The [Wisconsin Association of School Boards](#) had this to say about the school funding plan: *“Because the general aid appropriation is frozen in the first year (i.e., no new money is added) the result is a zero-sum game where the amount of the gains in aid by some districts will equal the amount of the losses by others. The likely losers will be rural districts in the northern, western and southwestern areas of the state where few voucher schools are located. School boards in these districts will likely be faced with the prospect of raising property taxes to offset the loss of aid due to voucher expansion.”*

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Restructuring (motions #494 & #501)

Summary: In light of numerous concerns raised in a recent audit by the non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau, as well as an investigative report which revealed a \$500,000 loan being improperly awarded to a Scott Walker campaign donor, there was bi-partisan agreement among JFC members that changes need to be made at the WEDC. The committee took action to remove Gov. Walker as Chair of the WEDC Board, rejected \$55 million in additional funding for WEDC and voted down the Governor’s proposal to merge WEDC with the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority.

How they voted: There was bi-partisan support for the WEDC restructuring proposals, with efforts by minority-party Democrats to push for additional changes being rejected on a 12-4 party-line vote.

Medical Assistance (MA) and BadgerCare – Dept. of Health Services (Motions #495 & #503)

Summary: Republicans and Democrats offered different MA proposals with some agreement on key issues. Notably, there was bi-partisan support to reject the Governor’s proposal to phase out SeniorCare and move seniors to Medicare Part D for their prescription drug coverage. As a result of the committee’s actions, the SeniorCare program will remain unchanged. On the issue of BadgerCare expansion, the two parties remain divided with Republicans on the committee rejecting the Democrats’ proposal to increase BadgerCare coverage and secure additional federal funding for the state’s health care program. Budget experts estimate that expanding BadgerCare coverage would save state taxpayers \$360 million.

How they voted: On a 12-4 party-line vote, the committee adopted the Republican proposal which included 19 MA-related provisions and increases MA spending by \$74 million above the Governor’s proposed budget.

Signed into Law

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Increase maximum speed limit to 70 MPH - 2015 Wisconsin Act 19

On Wednesday, May 20, Governor Walker signed Assembly Bill 27 into law as 2015 Wisconsin Act 19, which will allow certain sections of Wisconsin freeways to increase the speed limit to 70MPH. This bill received bi-partisan support in both the State Senate and State Assembly. The law change went into effect on Friday, May 22. A memo describing the law change can be [found here](#)

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This State Capitol Update is provided by Senator Jennifer Shilling, the Minority Leader in the Wisconsin State Senate. For additional information on legislative or committee action, please email Sen.Shilling@legis.wi.gov or call 608-266-5490.