

Assembly Republicans Pack Bags Without Taking Action

Written by Peter Barca, Assembly Democratic Leader, District 64

Friday, 26 February 2016 11:54 - Last Updated Friday, 26 February 2016 12:16



They rushed through nearly 200 bills last week to end the legislative session without taking action on major issues plaguing hardworking Wisconsinites.

MADISON - Last week, Assembly Republicans rushed through nearly 200 bills in what they promised will be the end of the 2015-2016 legislative session.

In all the session activity, there was no help for our public schools, no action to boost Wisconsin's paltry job creation record and no action on sluggish wage growth. The party in power took no steps to address our crumbling roads and bridges and there was nothing done to lower monthly student loan payments for the one million Wisconsinites saddled with student loan debt.



Ordinary people tell me that they want their kids to get a high-quality education, they want to protect our lakes, and they want their communities to be safe and for small businesses to thrive. They want a chance to pursue the American Dream by working hard, playing by the rules and making a better future for the next generation.

Unfortunately, during the legislative session Republicans have been far more focused on rewarding their political friends than on addressing the issues ordinary Wisconsinites face.

- Instead of investing in our neighborhood schools as we proposed, Republicans voted to divert \$800 million in taxpayer funds over the next 10 years to unaccountable private schools.
- Instead of growing jobs as we proposed, Republicans protected their own jobs by doubling campaign contribution limits and dismantling the non-partisan campaign oversight board.
- Instead of stopping companies from outsourcing jobs on the taxpayer dime as we

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proposed, Republicans covered their own tracks by making it harder to prosecute political corruption.

- Instead of growing wages as we proposed, Republicans drove down wages by passing right-wing policies like so-called "Right to Work" and gutting prevailing wage protections.
- Instead of allowing student loan borrowers to refinance their debt as we proposed, Republicans offered weak alternatives that left the vast majority with no relief.
- Instead of investing in our economic engines as we proposed, Republicans gutted the UW System by a quarter billion dollars and failed to reform our scandal-plagued jobs agency.
- Instead of maintaining our parks, clean lakes and groundwater as we proposed, Republicans sold out our conservation tradition and sporting heritage and our future economy by selling off our parks and eviscerating environmental protections.

Worst of all, Republican legislators tried to keep more of what they're doing secret. Their failed attempt to roll back our state's open records laws would have made it nearly impossible for taxpayers to hold lawmakers accountable for their actions in office.

The people of Wisconsin deserve better.

Assembly Democrats spent all session aggressively pushing forward a positive alternative. That's why we pursued an economic opportunity and middle-class agenda to grow jobs and wages and make us competitive in the global economy. We also advocated for sustainable transportation, full and fair funding for our public schools, and reforms to make our jobs agency and government more accountable to taxpayers.

Democrats look forward to building coalitions with organizations and small businesses to create a smarter, cleaner and more prosperous state.

Assembly writer Laura Smith contributed to this article.