

## What a New Year Brings

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*Sen, Jeff Smith writes about what he's looking forward to accomplishing in the upcoming New Year.*

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BRUNSWICK, WI - I don't know about you, but as one year comes to a close it's too easy to think about how it went by too fast. With a new year approaching it's also nice to think about future possibilities—what can be done. Imagine how much can change.

In reality, the last day of one year just becomes the first day of the New Year, just as any day dawns. But a new year gives us a mental charge, and can be so much more than any other day. Many people set new goals and resolutions thinking how they can do better and be better.

Wouldn't it be great if the world of politics would do the same? Typically, there isn't much happening the last couple weeks of the year in the Capitol. A new year brings us back together for hearings and floor sessions and a chance to accomplish what needs to be done. In an odd numbered year, the start of the New Year initiates a new session; we develop a budget and establish priorities for the next two years. When an even numbered year begins, the session is coming to an end and we must consider what needs to be done before the campaign season

takes over.

Looking ahead to 2022, the top issue for most of us is likely COVID-19. While we've learned to cope with the virus, we're ready to put this pandemic behind us. 2022 should be the year we can set aside differences and agree that ending the pandemic is more important than politics. Find the mask that makes you comfortable, or even fashionable. Make sure you and your loved ones get vaccinated. By making our communities safer, we can set more of our attention on other policy priorities.

There's always more we can do in Madison as policymakers: strengthen Wisconsin's infrastructure, improve healthcare access, invest in our public schools. Times change and we know that we must change with it.

One thing we must prioritize this year is broadband expansion. Nearly every aspect of our lives requires a reliable internet connection. We must expand broadband in Wisconsin through good public policy—it starts by investing in fiber to every home and business in Wisconsin. Access to the Internet is essential. Students need it to learn and communicate; businesses need it to connect to customers and vendors; families need it to access their health clinic, relatives, entertainment and everyday needs like groceries and medicine. The pandemic highlighted our need to be connected so we can access the world even when we're confined to our home.

Climate change is accelerating and impacting our communities as we witnessed recently with tornadoes, flooding and other extreme weather events. We can, as legislators, step it up with policies and investments to move us toward a more resilient and energy-efficient state. We must act today to give our future generations a productive life.



Politics certainly can be ugly and seems to have taken a turn for the worse in our country. When that happens nothing good gets done. Being at a standstill is unacceptable.

Access to healthcare is a prime example of how politics gets in the way. Nobody should be in a position of choosing whether to pay rent or see a doctor. Accessing insulin isn't an option for

many Americans, it's an absolute necessity. We introduced legislation this past year to make medication more affordable; in 2022, let's pass these bills. Let's make sure insulin, life-saving medication and health care are affordable and accessible. We can do that.

Public education is another priority that politics has interfered with. We've known for a long time that access to a quality education is key to a strong economy and strong nation. Making public education a pawn of politics is only hurting our state. Let's make 2022 the year we invest in our schools and uplift teachers and students.

The New Year is the best time to make these goals to do better. Let's make 2022 the year we all listen and come to a consensus that we want a better and more compassionate world.

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