

Rep. Chris Taylor's Capitol Update 7-13-2015

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MADISON - I hope you had a safe and happy 4th of July! Summer is in full swing and if you're like our family, you've been outside as much as possible, taking advantage of these warm, sunny days.

Budget Update

While many were out enjoying the 4th of July holiday week, we wrapped up budget deliberations in the Joint Finance Committee late in the evening on July 2nd. Republicans jammed packed their last omnibus budget motion, referred to as a "999" motion, with bad policies, including getting rid of our living wage ordinance, expanding pay day lenders authority and giving tax breaks to cigarette distributors. Overshadowing all of this was their efforts to gut our open records laws and draw a curtain around all legislative communications (see below for details).

Then, last week, the Assembly debated the full budget which was interrupted by a bomb threat that resulted in the Capitol being evacuated. I actively debated this budget and was vocally opposed to it. As you've heard me say before, this budget is a mess, full of more tax cuts for the most wealthy, retaliatory paybacks (goodbye to approximately 18 scientists at the DNR) and handouts to campaign donors - mainly at the expense of our public schools and higher education system. The real loser in this budget is Wisconsin's children. Millions of dollars will be siphoned from our public schools to subsidize private voucher and charter schools, which have never been shown to increase academic performance or graduation

rates.

Assembly Democrats offered nearly 30 amendments to make this budget more manageable and reasonable. From increasing funding for TAD (Treatment and Diversion) programs to eliminating the cuts to our UW System, to investing in public K-12 education and restoring Wisconsin's shoreland zoning regulations - Democrats offered commonsense solutions to some of this budget's greatest problems.

This budget does not help middle class families, it does not help our kids, it does not protect the things that Wisconsinites know and love. I proudly voted against this budget late Wednesday night, as did 11 of my Republican colleagues (although all 11 made little effort to improve the budget or speak against it). If you'd like to read my final statement on the 2015-17 state budget, click [HERE](#).

Yesterday, after five months of review and deliberation by the Legislature, Governor Walker signed the 2015-17 state budget into law. Although the new fiscal year began on July 1, due to Republican in-fighting behind closed doors and the Governor's continued absence from our state, this budget was not completed by the usual deadline of June 30.

Protecting Wisconsin's Open Records Laws

In the final "999" budget motion before the Joint Finance Committee, legislative Republicans attempted to scrap Wisconsin's open records laws and prevent legislators and staff from disclosing their drafting notes, letters and emails. I was one of the first to loudly speak out against these corrupt policies that would draw a curtain around the Capitol and end open government as we know it.

Republicans faced enormous backlash and public outrage in this last-minute budget addition.

The day after it was inserted into the budget, Governor Walker came out opposed to the changes DESPITE the fact we know from other members of the JFC committee that his office was involved in drafting/approving the language. How can we trust our elected officials when they are trying to hide and cover-up their actions?

To prevent future attempts to eliminate Wisconsin's open records law, I will be introducing a constitutional amendment that will include these open records protections in our state constitution. Seems to me that if you're hiding something, that probably means you shouldn't be doing it. If you don't want the public to know what you are up to, you have no business running for public office.

GOP Approves Irresponsible 20 Week Abortion Ban Legislation

Less than 12 hours after passing the disastrous state budget, Assembly Republicans were back at it, advancing Senate Bill 179, which bans safe, legal abortions after 20 weeks in nearly all circumstances. The women impacted by this bill are women who have had wanted pregnancies go wrong, who are very sick, or whose babies are very sick. This is one of the most harmful bills that has passed the Legislature since I was elected. Despite strong opposition from the medical community including the Wisconsin Medical Society, the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics - WI Chapter, Republicans voted in lock-step with the Governor and in-favor of this legislation which puts mothers and families at risk.

Politicians must stay out of our most personal and private decisions. These are some of the most tragic circumstances imaginable and too often, families are not aware of these serious complications until a 20 week ultrasound is performed. I strongly spoke out against this legislation during our debate, sharing my own story of pregnancy loss in an attempt to underscore how harmful it is to have politicians dictating and denying comprehensive and compassionate medical care. Unfortunately, this horrible bill passed on party lines, with all Republicans voting for it and all Democrats voting against it.

ALEC

I will be traveling to San Diego next week to attend the annual ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council) conference. This will be my 5th ALEC conference. It is important to attend because so many of the bad policies embraced by Republican elected officials start with ALEC. The keynote speaker will be none other than Governor Scott Walker (I think I'll sit right in the front for that!) To see previous articles I have written about ALEC, click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)

Moving Forward

Finally, I want to thank all of you for the support you have provided me throughout this budget process. Though I was honored to serve on the Joint Finance Committee, I am disappointed that the Republicans were not more open to our commonsense ideas to amend this harmful budget. After taking a breather to recharge and taking my kids to swim at the Goodman Pool, we must all renew our commitment to continuing to advocate for policies that actually help the people of our state. I am more committed than ever towards working for a day when progressive policies provide the foundation for our government and improve the lives of the people of this state.

I also want to thank you all for contacting me with your opinions about the state budget. My office received over 11,000 letters, emails and phone calls throughout this budget season. Though we are still catching up, I can honestly say that I have the most politically active constituents in the state and I am very proud of your engagement and your commitment. Thank you!

As always, if you have questions or would like more information about these issues or any other legislative issue, please do not hesitate to contact my office via phone at 608-266-5342 or via email at Rep.Taylor@legis.wi.gov.

Have a great week!

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