http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/wi-senate-swearing-in-s5.jpg



Sen. Smith writes about what motivated him to enter into public service and the potential for Wisconsin's future once we work past the politics.

MADISON - When I think about Wisconsin's future, I can't help but think about my family's past. This might sound backwards, but I think many others may feel the same way.

I reflect back on the opportunities my father had in starting his own window cleaning business; or the hard work that my wife and I put in to build our home from the ground up in Brunswick; or the cherished memories my daughters made growing up, caring for our many animals on our hobby farm.

This is the past that I think so fondly of. I entered into public service to preserve the values we share as Wisconsinites and ensure more families have the same opportunities my family was fortunate to have. I carried this mentality every drive down to Madison, every bill I introduced and every vote I took.

When it comes down to it, I believe many of my legislative colleagues feel the same way. The sad thing is politics is more divisive than ever before, which hindered attempts to move meaningful policies forward. I know this isn't news to you, but it's worth talking about.

Why don't your legislators solve problems we all know exist? I've pointed this out time and again, but now that the legislative session ended, we're faced with the stark reality that there's still a lot of unfinished business to take care of.

We should have accomplished a lot more this legislative session. Wisconsinites shouldn't have to wait until next year to see the results their leaders were already elected to deliver. Now, it becomes even more important to look ahead at what needs to be done.

While it does seem like we've made some progress toward connecting rural Wisconsin to the rest of the world, we could do much better. Fiber to every home is within our grasp right now. We have the funds to expand broadband statewide and I've introduced legislation to do so. Maybe next year?

Many families are still struggling with rising healthcare costs in our country. We can do a lot here in Wisconsin to make healthcare more affordable just by expanding BadgerCare. Wisconsin has lost out on billions of dollars already from the feds. There really is no logical reason that we haven't done this already—just politics. Maybe next year?



I've often been asked if marijuana will ever be legalized in Wisconsin. This is a perfect example of short-sighted politics. While neighboring states have legalized medical marijuana and some are now regulating recreational marijuana, the Republican majority made sure we didn't even have public hearings on the subject. Maybe next year?

We have so much we can – and must – do to protect Wisconsin's natural resources, starting with our drinking water. PFAS has been found in municipal wells from all corners of our state. These dangerous manmade chemicals can be detected with testing but it can be expensive. Politics has stymied the DNR from doing more and adopting measures to ensure communities have clean drinking water. Maybe next year?

Deer hunting has a long illustrious history in Wisconsin, attracting hunters from around the country. That's why we must stop the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Every session I join other colleagues in introducing bills to address CWD but we have yet to make progress and the disease continues to spread and cause great concern. Maybe next year?

We know we must invest in our K-12 schools and our children's future. Instead Republicans are bent on putting your public money in private education. Public education is meant for everyone. Legislators should stop pilfering public dollars for private special interests. Maybe next year?

In the legislature, only a handful of senators in the Republican majority control what gets done, which explains the lack of progress on these critical issues. You deserve better.

There's incredible potential for our state's future. Together, we can create opportunities for Wisconsin families and businesses if only we can see past the politics and power grabs. With solutions within our reach, we can and must do better.