

New Session, Same Story

Posted on Jan 13, Posted by [Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Sen. Smith writes about the beginning of the 2021-22 legislative session and the lack of compromise we've seen from Republican leaders thus far on COVID-19 relief.

MADISON - Last Monday, on January 4th, the Wisconsin State Legislature began the 2021-22 legislative session. New members were sworn in and all elected officials looked ahead to the new session.

Inauguration Day is an important reminder that the Legislature includes elected representatives from many walks of life. Our job is to listen to professionals and ensure they have what they need to do their jobs the best they can.

Every session, elected officials bring their unique experience and expertise forward to introduce new policy proposals. Although we may not always immediately agree, our collective differences can help us change and improve a proposal. When there are two proposals to address one problem, it's logical to compare the differences. We can identify some points of agreement for compromise even if the differences are vast. In some negotiations, both parties look for agreement and accept certain parts they might otherwise not have put in their own

plan.



Nearly everyone I hear from would be pleased if their elected officials compromised more. Compromise can be the difference between making real progress and doing nothing. That's exactly where we find ourselves today with leaders spoiled by unchallenged power through Wisconsin's gerrymandered maps. Unfortunately this unwillingness to compromise and leave behind political ambitions for the greater good couldn't be more evident than it is right now.

Just once, most people would think petty politics could be set aside for all the hardships families are facing during this pandemic. But it doesn't seem to be possible in this political environment we live in. Initially, we passed a bipartisan COVID-19 Response Bill in April with the expectation we'd meet again soon. However, once it passed, the Republican Majority Party opted for a 270 day vacation instead of holding another extraordinary session to pass additional COVID-19 relief, fix the unemployment crisis and help schools continue educating students.

Governor Evers introduced two bills—including a compromise proposal—to the Legislature on December 22nd after waiting months for Republican legislative leaders to act. Governor Evers held meetings with Republican leaders, listened to their ideas and even stripped out parts of his initial proposal before settling on provisions they agreed on. The Governor's [COVID-19 compromise bill](#) includes measures to clear the unemployment insurance backlog; covers COVID-19 testing; makes infrastructure available to improve broadband access and more.

