

Reflecting on 2021: A Year of Action

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 22 December 2021 15:21

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/wi-senate-swearing-in-s5.jpg>



Sen. Jeff Smith reflects on all he has accomplished in 2021.

MADISON - The year is coming to a close. Like other years, it seems like I was just getting used to writing “2021,” and soon I will have to start writing “2022.” Time is flying by; it’s hard to believe it’s been almost two years since we’ve been under the weight of a global pandemic. We’ve certainly learned a lot about how to adapt.

This is the time of year to reflect on what went right, what went wrong and what we accomplished. It can be too easy to hang on to the things that went wrong or felt negative. So, for my own mental well-being, I find it helpful to remind myself that good things have happened and I’ve come across really good people along the way.

One of my favorite things is hearing stories from strangers and friends about their lives and how they’re affected by current events. I can connect with people in many different ways, but my favorite way is through my Stop and Talks. The pandemic has made it difficult to connect this way, but with the vaccine and safety measures in place, I’ve been able to revive my Stop and Talks.

You may have seen my old red farm truck with a sign by the side of the road all across the district. It hasn’t always been easy to get around (including a couple months when my 1999

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Dodge needed extensive work), but I hosted my mobile listening sessions in areas like Black River Falls, Alma Center, Prescott, Eau Claire, Fountain City, Whitehall, Independence, Arcadia, Galesville and Ellsworth. Watch for me and my truck in 2022 and stop to share your thoughts, concerns and needs.



While the pandemic hindered many opportunities to get together, I still managed to put 5,115 miles on my vehicles in 2021 to attend meetings and events throughout the district. I'm even surprised at that number since so many meetings happened virtually.

If you're reading this column you may be aware that I pen something each week in an attempt to keep you informed. I wrote fifty-two columns over the course of the year, writing weekly about a wide range of topics that are grabbing the headlines or bills that might be flying under the radar that you should know about. This year I wrote about elections, PFAS, schools, climate change, agriculture, broadband expansion and much more. If you've missed any musings from me, you can find all of them on my website (legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/31/smith) and you can sign up for weekly e-updates.

It's also been a busy year in my office. I've received 5,269 contacts this year from 3,722 constituents in the 31st Senate District along with another 1,303 contacts from 2,143 citizens outside the 31st Senate District. That can be a staggering number for any office and I give all the credit to a stellar staff in my office for helping me answer all those contacts with professional and thoughtful demeanor. We may not always have the answers folks are looking for but we will always do our best to find the help needed.

During this past year I was busy working with my colleagues to introduce legislation to solve problems for people like you. I introduced twenty-eight bills as the lead author, including legislation to establish a non-partisan redistricting reform, address CWD and support Wisconsin students pursuing a higher education.

This year, I also served as a member of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, the State Tribal Relations Board and the Jackson County Childcare Task Force. I am thankful for these opportunities to learn and better myself as your representative.

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Reflecting on the past year is more than just what we see in the headlines. Reflection can be invigorating and can recharge the batteries for the upcoming year. I hope you can reflect and appreciate all that you've done in 2021 while looking forward to 2022.