

## State Capitol Update - votes “Under the Dome”

Written by Jennifer Shilling, State Senator 32nd District

Wednesday, 08 July 2015 16:36 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 July 2015 10:51

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MADISON - This update is provided to keep citizens informed about important decisions happening at the State Capitol and to help you stay updated on how elected officials are voting on key issues in Madison.

### Senate Extraordinary Session – July 7

*The State Senate met in extraordinary session on July 7 to take up the 2015-17 state budget (Senate Bill 21). A full list of session activities, budget amendments and votes can be found [here](#)*

### K-12 school funding (Senate Amendment 4 to SB 21)

**Summary:** The Department of Public Instruction estimates that more than half of all Wisconsin school districts will see a reduction in state aid next year as a result of cuts to school funding. Democrats proposed investing an additional \$270 million in categorical school aid to restore the local public school cuts and ensure that all children receive a quality education.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 4 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### Voucher school accountability (Senate Amendment 5 to SB 21)

**Summary:** Despite promises to increase voucher school accountability before further expanding the program and increasing the risk of fraud and abuse, no action was taken in the Joint Finance Committee to strengthen standards. In an effort to strengthen student and taxpayer protections, Democrats introduced this amendment to eliminate the expansion of private voucher school subsidies, increase education standards and strengthen public accountability.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 5 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **University of Wisconsin System funding (Senate Amendment 6 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** This amendment would restore the \$250 million cut to UW System schools, 2-year campuses and Extension programs.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 6 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **BadgerCare expansion (Senate Amendment 12 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** This amendment would expand access to affordable health care and lower state taxpayer costs by accepting available federal funds to strengthen BadgerCare. The non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau concluded that Wisconsin would save \$360 million in the 2015-17 budget if federal health care funds were accepted.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 12 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **Preserve long-term care, IRIS and Family Care (Senate Amendment 13 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** The Republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee made a number of sweeping changes to Wisconsin's long-term care programs which will eliminate the popular IRIS self-directing care program and jeopardize access to critical services. Additionally, new requirements for an individual assessment prior to receiving personal care services will result in a reduction of \$19 million in services available to people with disabilities.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 13 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **Special education funding (Senate Amendment 14 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** The end of the 2015-17 budget will mark the eighth consecutive year that special education funding has remained flat. Costs associated with educating students with disabilities have increased over time, resulting in an overall decrease in the average reimbursement rate the state provides to school districts. In 1980, the special education funding rate was 66.1% of total costs. By the end of the 2014-15 school year, the rate fell to just 26.8%. This budget amendment would have increased the reimbursement rate to 33% of schools' special education cost.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 14 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party

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Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **Funding for state parks, science and educator positions, recycling grants and Stewardship (Senate Amendment 17 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** This amendment would restore funding to numerous programs that were cut in the budget including state parks, DNR educators and scientist positions, recycling grants and bioenergy research initiatives. Additionally, it would maintain current bonding authority for Stewardship land conservation efforts and provide additional funding for urban forestry grants.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 17 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **Higher Ed, Lower Debt student loan relief (Senate Amendment 20 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** With over 800,000 Wisconsin residents impacted by student loan debt, Democrats have advocated for additional relief from high interest rates and burdensome debt payments. The Higher Ed, Lower Debt amendment would allow individuals to refinance student debt at lower interest rates similar to options currently available for home mortgages and car loans.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 20 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

### **WEDC accountability and prohibition on outsourcing Wisconsin jobs (Senate Amendment 22 to SB 21)**

**Summary:** After years of troubling audits and revelations of potential criminal violations at Gov. Walker's flagship jobs agency, government watchdog groups have called for greater accountability and public transparency. This amendment would prevent taxpayer dollars from being used to outsource Wisconsin jobs, require employees at the WEDC to report instances of fraud to law enforcement, and subject agency officials to state laws governing misconduct in public office.

**How they voted:** Senate Amendment 22 was rejected by the majority party on a 19-14 party line vote.

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) opposed the amendment.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) supported the amendment.

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### **Final passage of the 2015-17 Wisconsin State Budget (SB 21)**

**How they voted:** Passage of the 2015-17 state budget was approved by the Senate on a 18-15 vote

Sen. Lasee (R-Marathon), Sen. Olson (R-Ripon), Sen. Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), Sen. Roth (R-Appleton) and Sen. Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) supported passage of the budget.

Sen. Hansen (D-Green Bay) and Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay) opposed passage of the budget.

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*This State Capitol Update is provided by Senator Jennifer Shilling, the Minority Leader in the Wisconsin State Senate. For additional information on legislative or committee action, please email [Sen.Shilling@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Sen.Shilling@legis.wi.gov) or call 608-266-5490.*