

Senate Republicans' Full Flip-Flop On The State Credit Card

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Brandon Weathersby
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GOP leadership, who strongly opposed borrowing money to pay for Wisconsin's roads, now back a plan to do just that by issuing \$712 million in additional bonds.

MADISON - The state budget is more than two weeks overdue and Senate Republicans are getting desperate. After loudly opposing swiping the state's credit card for fixing our state's crumbling roads and bridges during the 2015-2017 budget process, Senate Republicans proposed borrowing \$712 million over the next two years for roads. Even worse, nearly half of that figure would be paid back from accounts that fund schools and health care programs.

Wisconsin reporters caught on quickly to Senate Republicans misleading the public and flip-flopping on their promises:

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Senate Republicans in Wisconsin reverse course and break out credit card for roads](#)

"'We're not going to kick the can down the road,' Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) said in November 2015 when she and other Senate Republicans unsuccessfully tried to block issuing \$350 million in bonds for I-39/90 and four other projects."

"But on Tuesday, Darling — the co-chairwoman of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee — joined her Senate colleagues in embracing a plan that would borrow \$712 million over the next two years for roads. Nearly half of that amount would be paid back from the account that funds schools and health care programs instead of the transportation fund."

[...]

"She's not the only one to have a change of heart."

"When he sided with Darling to vote against additional borrowing in 2015, Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) issued a statement that said, 'I do not believe we should be going further into debt when we haven't created any new sources of revenue to make the payments on this new debt.'"

"On Tuesday, Marklein appeared at a Capitol news conference with Darling and other GOP senators to announce their budget plan that includes the \$712 million in borrowing for roads."

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Wisconsin State Journal: [With borrowing-heavy road plan, state Senate GOP does stark turnaround](#)

"Even the committee's Senate vice chairman, Luther Olsen, R-Ripon, acknowledged the shift in a Wednesday interview. 'It's a little inconsistent with our past actions; you're exactly right,' Olsen said."

"Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke, R-Kaukauna, said Tuesday that he's confused by the Senate's "complete 180" on transportation borrowing. 'The Senate seems to have completely reversed course,' Steineke said."

[...]

"Also in November 2015, another Republican on the committee, Sen. Tom Tiffany, R-Hazelhurst, told WJFW-TV that he was concerned by the state's borrowing level for transportation. 'We're getting up to where we're about 20 cents on the dollar that's going to debt service now for transportation,' he said. 'That's getting too high.'"

[...]

"Tiffany said last week that he now doesn't believe new transportation revenues are needed in the next budget."

Associated Press: [Senate Republicans Who Once Hated Borrowing Now Embrace It](#)

"Senate Republicans who strongly opposed borrowing money to pay for Wisconsin's roads now back a plan to do just that by issuing \$712 million in additional bonds, which has been a major obstacle to reaching a budget deal."

"Assembly Speaker Robin Vos emerged from a 90-minute meeting with Gov. Scott Walker and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald on Wednesday saying that negotiations are continuing, but no deal had been reached. He also blasted Senate Republicans for supporting \$712 million in borrowing for roads, saying putting that much on the state's credit card 'doesn't make any sense.' Senate Republicans used to agree."