

Democratic proposals on school funding, broadband and student loan debt gain support.

MADISON – With a public approval rating at 31 percent and lingering opposition to Gov. Walker's presidential campaign, many Republican lawmakers have found themselves in a difficult position. In an effort to shift attention away from troubling poll numbers and disappointing job losses, Republican lawmakers are turning to a new source for policy ideas: Democrats.



"For five years, Republican legislators followed Gov. Walker's lead in cutting local school funding, limiting access to health care and rejecting investments for broadband projects," said Senate Democratic Leader **Jennifer Shilling** (D-La Crosse). "As a result of these misplaced priorities, we've seen family wages decline, a shrinking middle class and mass layoffs at a five year high. While it's taken them a few years to recognize the growing challenges in our state, I appreciate that Republicans are finally looking at Democratic ideas that will jump start our economy and strengthen Wisconsin's middle class."

Complicating matters for legislators who want to see progress on these issues is the fact that Republican leaders are planning to adjourn the legislative floor period as early as February or March. This leaves a short window to pass an ambitious agenda and follow through on unresolved promises to strengthen school accountability, overhaul the state's troubled jobs agency and pass a long-term transportation funding fix.

"Senate Democrats continue to push our comprehensive Badger Blueprint agenda which includes a wide range of bold, forward-looking pro-growth initiatives that invest in education, infrastructure and economic development," added Shilling. "In order to move Wisconsin forward, we need innovative solutions on student loan debt like Sen. **Dave Hansen's** Higher Ed., Lower Debt bill to allow families to refinance their loans at lower interest rates. We need to restore rural broadband investments like Sen.

Kathleen Vinehout
has championed for years. And we need to restore the funding for rural schools that have seen some of the largest cuts from Republicans in Madison. With a short window of opportunity, we need swift action on these priorities and not just legislative lip-service."