

Team Smith is Here to Serve

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

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State Senator Jeff Smith writes about everything that he, and his office, can do to serve residents of the 31st Senate District.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - "What can you help with?" It's a question I get a lot, but I was asked this most recently while visiting folks in an Arcadia neighborhood. You see, I've been getting out in other communities around the 31st Senate District, meeting others and dropping off contact cards to make sure folks know how to get ahold of me. I look for any opportunity to be out where people can talk to me in person. So what is it that I (and my office) can do for you?

A legislator, and his or her office, is meant to serve the constituents of the district they're elected to represent. From listening to your ideas and answering your questions to navigating government agencies or supporting local government needs, we sure can do a lot to help.

The 31st Senate District office is a busy place. Team Smith includes me and my staff, and we're here to hear from you. We respond to your phone calls and emails to share helpful resources. Team Smith also researches policy issues or potential legislation. Bill ideas often come from constituents who are facing difficult situations that need law changes to fix their problems.

I can walk through a good example of how you and I can work together to solve a problem. Back at the farmer's market in 2009, a constituent told me how she was looking into getting a

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dog. She discovered that many ads led to unhealthy and unethical puppy mills and she wondered if I'd be interested in looking into it. Together we visited some dealers and went to a dog auction in Thorp to learn more. My staff and I connected with other groups that were concerned about this practice and we began piecing together language to prohibit dangerous dog breeding and selling practices. Without getting into all the details, our efforts led to successfully passing legislation that was signed by the governor to become Act 90 in 2009.

This story highlights just one aspect of a legislative office, although it may be what many folks expect we put most of our efforts into. However, there's so much more to what we do in a legislative office that doesn't make the headlines the same way that political disagreements and new bills do. We work with agencies if residents are experiencing a problem, like missing unemployment insurance benefits, for example. We connect to organizations and resources to assist individuals if they're struggling to pay rent or take care of a loved one who is aging or has a disability. If my office can't help directly, we'll know someone who may be able to.



As a legislator, I can't step in to help with a constituent's court case or legal proceeding. And realistically, a bill I introduce can't become law at the snap of my fingers (no matter how hard I've tried). It takes time for an idea to work its way through the legislative process, but it's my job to work with my colleagues – on both sides of the aisle – to have your ideas heard in the Capitol.

Of course, for the past 18 months, we've had to get creative in finding ways to connect safely. Just because you might have spent more time at home with your family doesn't change the fact that you may need some help or may have an idea to share with my office.

Many times, it's simply connecting with constituents at the farmer's market or at one of my Stop & Talks that will lead me to an issue I had no knowledge of before. Whether you see me at a Stop & Talk, have a contact card on your doorstep, or prefer to give my office a call, I want to hear from you.

Send us an email at Sen.Smith@legis.wisconsin.gov or call us at (608)266-8546. Certainly, don't shy from approaching me in person when you see me around. I have a personal belief that I'm here to serve whenever you see me, no matter where it might be.