

Come to the Budget Listening Session Tuesday, April 11

Posted on Apr 05, Posted by [Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Sen. Smith promotes public participation in the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee budget listening sessions. Join them next Tuesday, April 11, at the W.R. Davies Center at UW-Eau Claire from 10:00am to 5:00pm to share your thoughts on the 2023-25 state budget!

MADISON - It's not fun, but we all have to budget. We budget our time and our resources because we have a limited amount – of hours in the day, of energy, of money. Every day, each one of us makes decisions on how we allocate our time and resources, and while it's not always a zero-sum game, sometimes we have to make tough choices.

So budgeting is not a foreign idea to any of us. Planning something as large as a state budget may seem daunting, but the same principles apply. We have a limited amount of money and many priorities to keep in mind. We start by estimating as closely as possible the revenue our state can expect over a two-year period. Then we allocate funding to the areas of spending we know we will need to address.

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone agreed on priorities, and it were as simple as filling out a

spreadsheet, moving the funds we need into each column? Unfortunately, the reality is much more complicated than that.



Every odd-numbered year, the legislature and the governor (in theory) work together to draft a new budget for our state. Since we in the Legislature are elected to serve you, the people of Wisconsin, it is only right that you have the opportunity to have a say in which areas you feel are most in need of state funding.



It's common for legislative committees to hold public hearings on bills before those bills are sent to the full body for a vote. Public hearings are where legislators gather more information and hear the thoughts and ideas of those people most affected by the policies on the table. Public input is vital, and the voices of our constituents is so valuable in making legislation better.

For my part, I get out every week in my red truck for my "Stop and Talks," my mobile office hours throughout the communities in Senate District 31. I encourage anyone and everyone to stop and talk with me. I'll be posting the dates and times on my Facebook and Twitter, and would love to have the chance to catch up with you the next time I'm in your community.

It's somewhat rarer to have the opportunity to have your voice heard by a larger body of legislators, representing districts all across the state. Because the budget is the largest and most impactful bill that legislators vote on, representatives of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee (or JFC) go on the road to hold public hearings on the proposals being considered.

This year, the JFC has scheduled four such listening schedules, one of them right here in western Wisconsin. **They'll be coming to Eau Claire next Tuesday, April 11th at UW-Eau Claire's W.R. Davies Center.**

The public hearing will go from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Anyone who wants to testify will be asked to fill out a form to be added to the queue. The earlier you are added to the queue, the sooner your name will be called to testify, so it's good to arrive early.



Generally each person gets two minutes to share their comments to the Joint Finance Committee, or five minutes for groups of three or more. Having printed comments of your testimony for each of the 16 members is encouraged. If you need accessibility accommodations, call the Legislative Fiscal Bureau at (608) 266-3847.

If you can't make it to the hearing, you can also submit your testimony online at <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments> or by emailing your testimony to budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov.

Tuesday, April 11 is your opportunity to make your voice heard. Whatever your priorities, it's so important that the members of this committee hear from you. These hearings are democracy in action, and no one can tell your story but you.

I'll see you there!

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