

Supporting Stewardship, Preserving Wisconsin

One of my proudest accomplishments in the Legislature is the creation of the Stewardship Fund. The Stewardship Fund is the largest conservation effort in our state's history. The fund is a major investment by the people of Wisconsin to preserve our state's natural heritage by expanding our state parks and forests, preserving wildlife habitat and open space and providing new opportunities for outdoor recreation.

When I developed the Stewardship Fund, I was guided by the belief that we have an obligation to future generations to be wise stewards of our natural resources. Since the program began in 1990, it has saved more than half a million acres of the best of what is left of outdoor Wisconsin.

The Stewardship Fund needed to be reauthorized for another ten years in this budget and it was one of the most contentious issues in the budget debate. I argued strongly that development pressures and changing land ownership patterns threaten the natural resources that make our state so special. Without the Stewardship Fund, many of the best remaining natural areas in our state would be lost.

The Executive Budget proposed that the Fund be reauthorized and that its funding level be adjusted to maintain its purchasing power in the face of skyrocketing land prices.



The Stewardship Fund has helped build our state trail system. Earlier this summer, I cut the ribbon at the opening of the new Badger State Trail. The Trail currently travels from Fitchburg to the Illinois state line and will be extended next year into Madison.

Unfortunately, the Assembly Republican budget would have cut the fund by 60 percent. Fortunately, that approach did not prevail and the final budget expands Stewardship and continues it for another 10 years.

Areas protected by the Stewardship Fund include the 40,000-acre Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, the Lower Wisconsin Riverway, with its magnificent sandstone bluffs and sandbar islands, and tens of thousands of acres of our northern forests. The Fund has been used to protect the last undeveloped section of the Wisconsin Dells, help to lengthen the Ice Age Trail, save some of the last wild lakes in northern Wisconsin and expand state forests and parks like Devil's Lake and the Kettle Moraine. The Fund has also assisted communities all around the state to save open space and create new parks. The Stewardship Fund has been especially important in rapidly growing Dane County and has protected areas as diverse as the Brooklyn Wildlife Area and the Pheasant Branch Conservancy in Middleton.

An important aspect of Stewardship is the state trail system including the Capital City Trail here in our area. Just this summer, the new Badger Trail was opened which will soon provide a car-free recreational trail from Madison to Monroe.

SeniorCare Helps Make Medicine Affordable

Some years ago, I heard from many of my elderly constituents that they could not afford the medication they needed. The rising cost of prescription drugs was often forcing them to make a difficult decision between paying for their prescriptions or paying for other expenses like food or heat.

I helped author legislation to change that. In 2001, we were finally able to establish SeniorCare. SeniorCare provides assistance to moderate income senior citizens to pay for prescription medication. The assistance is based on income. SeniorCare has helped more than 100,000 Wisconsin seniors to afford their prescriptions. Moderate income seniors save an average of \$1,200 each year on their medications.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration tried to eliminate SeniorCare earlier this year and require all seniors to use Medicare Part D instead. Medicare Part D is the federal program that provides limited help to seniors to pay for medicine. However, SeniorCare is far superior

for almost all Wisconsin seniors. A major reason that Wisconsin's SeniorCare is more cost effective and helpful to seniors than Part D is that Wisconsin uses its buying

"Thank you, Representative Black for your leadership in making prescription drugs for seniors a top priority for Wisconsin."
- Wisconsin AARP

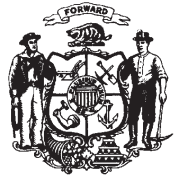
power to negotiate better prices with the pharmaceutical companies.

There is a happy ending, at least for now. I worked with my legislative colleagues to ask Congress to save SeniorCare. Based on our advocacy, Congress responded and passed legislation continuing SeniorCare until at least 2010.

In one of the wealthiest nations in the world, no senior citizen should have to go without the medicine they need.

State Representative Spencer Black

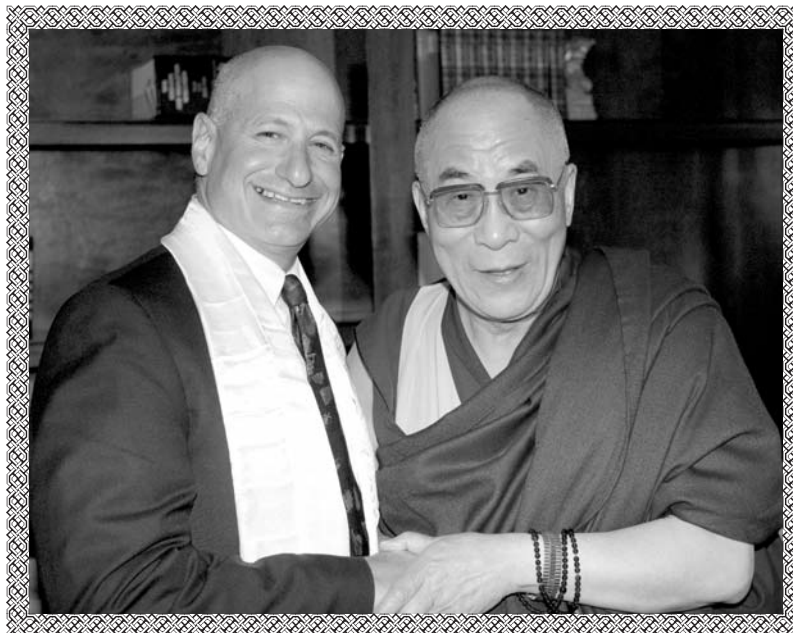
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A Visit With the Dalai Lama

This summer I had the special privilege of being invited by the Dalai Lama to meet with him during his visit to Madison. It was a great honor to sit down with this world renown humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize winner. During our meeting, the Dalai Lama thanked me for my efforts to promote freedom for Tibet. The Dalai Lama was also very interested in discussing the well-being of the many Tibetans who have settled in our community.



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Spencer Black
State Representative



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State Representative Spencer Black

Capitol Report

Fall 2007

Dear Neighbor:

This issue of the Capitol Report includes my 2007 Annual Legislative Survey. I look forward to reading every reply, so I hope you will take a few minutes to complete and return your survey. I will post the results of the 2007 survey beginning December 20 on my website (www.spencerblack.com). If you prefer, I will be glad to mail you the results — just note that on your response.

Every year that I have served as your representative, I have sent an annual questionnaire. This year, I am sending you my survey later than usual. That's because I wanted to include information about the state budget and, as you probably know, the passage of the state budget was delayed by several months.

I am very frustrated by this unnecessary delay. During the prolonged negotiations, I repeatedly urged that a budget compromise be reached quickly. Looking at the eventual budget agreement, I can see no reason why this compromise couldn't have been passed months earlier.

I am cosponsoring legislation to help prevent a future delay such as we experienced this year. In addition to enacting specific penalties for failure to pass a budget, I believe we must pass campaign finance reform. The budget delay is not just wrong in and of itself — it is a symptom of a deeper problem.

Banning fundraising during the budget would both improve the budget and speed the process. As a matter of principle, I refuse to raise funds for my campaign while the budget is under consideration.

Big money campaigns and the constant push to raise money for those campaigns certainly contributed to the budget delay. That's why we need campaign finance reform to get the big money out of politics and reduce special interest influence.

I also believe it is important that I practice what I preach in my own campaigns. Ever since I have been in office,

I have refused all contributions from Political Action Committees, Special Interest Committees, lobbyists or from out-of-state. I will continue to adhere to this approach to my own fundraising as long as I serve in the Legislature.

The budget that was eventually passed was a compromise and contains some provisions with which I strongly disagree. However, the budget does accomplish a number of goals I have long sought including health care coverage for all children, increased support for the University of Wisconsin and for student financial aid, expansion of the Stewardship Fund, funding for Public Radio and TV, and a tax credit for dependent care expenses.

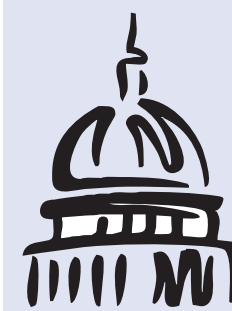
It is an honor to serve as your state representative. Please feel free to contact me whenever you have questions or feel strongly about any state legislative issue.

Sincerely,

Spence

Spencer Black
State Representative

How to reach me:



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