



## FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT Anticipating Future Needs

The lakes, forests, rivers, bluffs, and wildlife of Wisconsin are some of our most cherished and definitive resources – and we want to keep it that way. I've made a determined effort to introduce and support sensible, forward-thinking measures that will safeguard our natural resources and counteract threats to our environment.

### Stewardship Fund

I was one of many sponsors who worked to expand this vital conservation program which functions to preserve and grant public access to Wisconsin's unique natural resources. We succeeded in extending the Stewardship Fund through 2020 and increasing funding by 40%.

### Clean Energy

(SB 380) – Not only did I back the provision of \$15 million for renewable energy grants, I supported numerous measures to boost Wisconsin's burgeoning renewable fuel industry and encourage the development of cleaner alternative energies. While ethanol and biodiesel are by no means the be-all and end-all, they represent bridge fuels that will reduce our dependence on traditional fuels and take us a step closer toward cleaner, more reliable energy consumption.

### Great Lakes Compact

I endorsed and will continue to endorse strong, precautionary guidelines which ensure that our water supply is

used responsibly as well as locally. Both parties must continue to work together to pass meaningful protections that will secure the longevity and economic vitality of our Great Lakes.

### Wisconsin Safe Climate Act

(SB 81/AB 157) – I supported this Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and establish statewide standards for the emission of carbon dioxide that are realistic and environmentally sound.



Steve and Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton honor Hobart Tredinnick of Mineral Point for a lifetime of volunteerism and community service.



Steve discusses the needs of local businesses with Kama Hanna, the Executive Director of the Sauk County Development Corporation. Steve is dedicated to enhancing the business climate by developing new jobs and ensuring that family-supporting jobs stay in our communities.

## UPCOMING EVENT?

While I do tour the district and host town hall meetings, I'd be obliged to attend or be a guest speaker for a local event you may be holding in the near future. Contact my office!



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**Steve Hilgenberg**



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## 2008 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

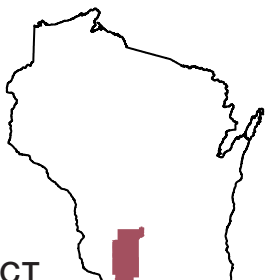
I appreciate the great challenge and honor you have given me to represent you in the Wisconsin State Assembly. When visitors come to my office, I remind them that the chair at my desk and the seat in the Assembly Chamber do not belong to me or any individual but to the constituents of the 51st Assembly District. This is our opportunity to work together to address the issues that affect the daily lives of folks in southwestern Wisconsin.

This Legislative Report is intended to update you on the issues I have focused much of my attention on. At the same time, I have made it a priority to spend as much time as possible meeting people all across the district.

Since day one, I have maintained that government is a bottom-up process. Your input is necessary to make government work to meet our needs as citizens of Wisconsin. This has to be about people and community, not money and power. Thanks for granting me the privilege to serve you.

Sincerely,

Steve Hilgenberg



51ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT





## FOCUS ON HEALTH CARE

# Affordable Health Care

When Henry Ford saw Model T sales fall, he knew something was wrong. The demand for his product was extremely high but people weren't buying. He realized that the Model T was too expensive – ordinary citizens couldn't shoulder the burden. After working with the private sector and other stakeholders to reduce prices, Model T sales skyrocketed and the breakthrough was evident across the country.

Today, we have a similar dilemma on our hands. With health care premiums rising by 9% every year, health insurance is becoming a greater burden for Wisconsin families and businesses. Everyone can agree that costs must be contained and coverage expanded if we are going to ensure that Wisconsin residents have access to high quality, affordable health care. I've worked tirelessly to understand these realities, bring fresh ideas to the table, examine the pros and cons of new proposals, find what works, and implement realistic, well-studied solutions.

### BadgerCare Plus

#### Affordable Health Care for Our Kids

I'm proud to have been one of the many people who worked to deliver this significant health care expansion which will provide 98% of the children in our state with access to health coverage. As of February 1, any family that wants to purchase health care for their kids can do so regardless of income – you can sign up online at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus>.

### SeniorCare *SAVED*

Last year, SeniorCare, the prescription drug program of choice for 104,000 seniors was scheduled to expire. The Bush Administration wanted to end it in favor of Medicare Part D. As a strong supporter of SeniorCare, I lobbied the Federal Government and helped launch a statewide petition drive to advocate in favor of SeniorCare. With the help of Senator Herb Kohl, this vital program was renewed through 2009. Now it continues to provide

quality prescription drugs at affordable prices while saving taxpayers millions of dollars in rebates from drug companies.

### Veterans Care Program

**(AB 596)** – One out of every eight veterans under 65 doesn't have health insurance; either their income is too high to access federal VA benefits, their employer doesn't provide coverage, or they simply cannot afford to pay for a private policy. I introduced this legislation to provide Wisconsin's uninsured veterans with 24 months of low-cost health insurance. We owe our veterans the opportunity to recuperate and reshape their lives on return to civilian life with access to affordable medical care.

### Catastrophic Care Authority

**(AB 738)** – As a former small business owner, I know how tough it can be to provide health insurance for employees. The total cost of providing health benefits in Wisconsin rose over 9% in 2005, to an average of \$9,321 for each employee. I introduced this legislation to develop a statewide reinsurance program that stabilizes health insurance premiums by spreading the risk of catastrophic health care costs across a larger pool.



Steve and members of the Sauk Prairie community discuss the status of our medical system at a recent Health Care Forum.

## VISIT MY NEW WEBSITE

My new website, available at [www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm51/news/index.htm](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm51/news/index.htm), provides a biography, an archive of updated press materials, a Kids Page, and a "Contact Me" link where you can submit questions and concerns.



## FOCUS ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

# Cleaning Up Campaigns and Elections

We cannot continue to ignore the need for public financing in our elections. The costs of running a campaign are too high and more and more citizens are getting the sense that without big money, their voice and their vote won't matter. Earlier this session, I co-authored AB 250/SB 171 to confront the influence of special interest money in the elections and affairs of Wisconsin Supreme Court Justices. This bill would offer 100% public financing to Supreme Court candidates who agree to limit their



Steve discusses the election process at a caucus meeting.

campaign spending to \$400,000. Not only would this bill establish a realistic spending limit for Supreme Court campaigns, it would free up candidates to focus on the issues instead of fundraising. In a recent letter to various state officials, all seven Justices of the Wisconsin Supreme Court emphasized how important it is that our highest court remains an unbiased, independent body that bases its rulings upon objective facts and state law – not upon special interests or campaign contributions. I certainly agree, and we must continue to take concrete, practical steps to secure an impartial judiciary and restore the public's trust in state government. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind that it's not enough for elected officials to keep talking about campaign finance reform; we have to cut through the rhetoric and get the job done. The time for clean elections is now.

**Wisconsin witnessed record spending in the most recent spring Supreme Court Election, dominated by negative advertising and outside special interest groups who combined to spend over \$6 million dollars.**



## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# Rethinking School Funding

School district budgets across the state are being stretched thinner and thinner. With rising fuel and health care costs, many school districts are being forced to go to the community with a referendum. Then after the money from past referenda sunsets, districts struggle to maintain services and they have to go back to the community for further relief. This revolving tendency truly wears down a community. This session, I supported Assembly Joint Resolution 35, a proposal calling for changes to the state's public school funding system. We must reduce our reliance on property taxes, we must acknowledge that some students cost more to educate than others, and we must recognize that school districts face different costs.



Steve and the Belmont High School Library Club celebrate the delivery of a new online school library catalog. Steve fought for the catalog in the budget negotiations.