

MAKING GOVERNMENT BETTER



A Good Idea Becomes a Good Law *The "Dan Anderson Bill"*

An idea suggested to me by Bayfield County Treasurer Dan Anderson was signed into law by Governor Doyle in March.

The legislation simplifies the distribution of the school levy and lottery credit payments. Formerly, the Dept. of Revenue would send the payments to the over 1,800 local treasurers, who then had to make further distribution to counties, public and technical schools.

Rep. Sherman presents Dan Anderson with a pen used to sign the bill into law.

Now the payments will go directly to the 72 county treasurers who will make the necessary disbursements as part of the overall property tax settlement process. Streamlining the process is far more efficient and cuts cost. It pays to listen to someone who does the job.

Many thanks to Dan and the County Treasurers Association, which actively supported the bill as it worked its way through the legislative process.

Meth Lab Policy Yields Results *Government CAN Work*

Government's failures get a lot of attention. But Wisconsin has succeeded spectacularly in dealing with meth labs in Western Wisconsin.

In 2005 I heard a news report on the terrible problems caused by meth labs in Western Wisconsin and on Minnesota's approach to the problem. I had a bill drafted, only to discover that my colleague, Rep. Kitty Rhoades (R - Hudson), working with law enforcement,

was introducing a similar bill. I dropped my bill in favor of supporting hers.

The bill restricted access to pseudoephedrine, the raw material for these labs. It required druggists to keep a log of buyers of large quantities. It passed easily. Later Rep. Rhodes and I, at the request of Bayfield County Sheriff Bob Follis, passed a trailer bill to assure law enforcement access to the log.

The results exceeded all expectations. The number of meth labs reached a peak in 2003 of 113 labs. By 2007, the number had declined to 7 meth labs. Meth cases overall declined by 50% in the same period as well.

Credit, of course, goes to law enforcement. I am glad we were able to aid their efforts.

Eliminating Spring Elections

I introduced **AJR 81**, which would eliminate the spring election.

Spring elections are limited to nonpartisan judicial and local offices. Elections for partisan offices are held in the fall.

Spring elections suffer from low voter turnout, while they are virtually as expensive to conduct as the fall elections. Low voter turnout makes the selection of these important offices less democratic. Also, trained poll workers can be hard to find and the cost of these elections is borne by property taxpayers.

Combining the two election cycles into a single fall election cycle would streamline our electoral system, save both human resources and tax dollars, and increase public involvement in democracy.

While the bill did not pass this session, I will reintroduce it next year.

AB 885 Would Advance Wisconsin's Energy Future



With the cost of all fuels at record highs, and electricity demand growing daily, Rep. Spencer Black (D-Madison) introduced AB885 this session. The bill changes the powers and processes of the Public Service Commission to give it a greater role in planning to meet our future electricity needs, and would require them to consider Wisconsin's energy needs up to 10 years into the future.

By giving the PSC a far broader vision as it enters the new energy age, Wisconsin will be able to craft a brighter energy future.



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Legislature Finally Passes Great Lakes Compact...

People throughout the state were stunned this year when the Assembly leadership refused to take up the Great Lakes Compact. Fortunately, compromise has been reached that allows the pact to be ratified in a special session later this spring.

The Great Lakes are at the heart of who we are in Wisconsin and at the same time one of our most valuable resources. Lake Superior, the largest body of fresh water in the world, dominates the lives of those of us who live in or near its basin.

The Compact governs diversions of water outside of the Great Lakes basin and massive new uses within it. The basin is the area in which water drains into the lakes. The Great Lakes have an unusually small basin for such large bodies of water, often only 20 miles from the shoreline. That is why the lakes are so fragile. Their ability to replenish diverted water is very limited.

The failure to ratify the Compact also would have had consequences for Wisconsin's ability to attract economic development and new jobs. Businesses considering major investments in our state need certainty about the regulatory climate.



Rep. Sherman testifies in support of the E-Waste bill, with Michael Martino of D3, Iron River, looking on.

The Compact enjoys broad support throughout the community. Even the mayors of so-called "straddle communities" (those partly within and partly outside the basin, like Waukesha) were satisfied that the standards governing their water use were fair and flexible.

...But Misses E-Waste Opportunity

S**B 397** would have created a system of recycling televisions, computers and other electronic devices. These devices contain toxic substances and can be both dangerous and expensive to dispose of. The bill passed the Wisconsin Senate on a lopsided 30-3 bi-partisan vote, but the Assembly Republican leadership refused to take it up.

SB 397 had the broadest support of any such bill in recent memory. From environmental groups, to manufacturers and retailers, waste handlers, local governments and counties, there was broad consensus that the approach used in this bill was the right one for Wisconsin's future. Even Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, no friend of regulation, testified in favor of the bill. The bill's market based approach and protection of property taxpayers gave it very broad appeal.

In February 2009 the entire country will convert to digital television broadcast. No licensed television stations may continue to broadcast analog signals. As a result, all analog televisions will become obsolete just months from now. Some people will opt to purchase set-top conversion boxes, but millions of people are expected to dispose of their analog TVs.

Hopefully, the Assembly leadership in the next session will demonstrate greater foresight.

You can get the text or history of any bill in the legislature, check our voting records, or obtain live audio or video feed of our sessions at the Legislature's website: www.legis.state.wi.us.

Bi-Partisan Effort Assists Wisconsin Families at End of Life

A few area residents got together to watch the documentary "A Family Undertaking," which deals with American funeral practice. It spurred a spirited discussion about how each wanted their remains dealt with after death. It was discovered that Wisconsin law



Gov. Doyle congratulates Rep. Sherman after signing his Final Rites bill into law.

did not assure an individual's wishes would be honored.

Among them was my chief of staff, who came to work determined to rectify the weakness in Wisconsin law. We introduced a bill, similar to an advanced medical directive, to give people the ability to set forth their final wishes in a legally binding format. Rep. Samantha Kerkman (R-Randall), working on similar legislation, contacted me to join forces. The result is **2007 Wisconsin Act 58**.

Having advance arrangements not only can relieve the anxiety of the person making the plan, it also provides a clear direction for survivors left to arrange the funeral of a loved one. To include such directions in a will is impractical, since the funeral is often over before it is read. Grieving survivors can feel overwhelmed and pressured to make arrangements not necessarily in anyone's best interest. At the same time, survivors

The Authorization for Final Disposition form will soon be available online at the Dept of Health & Family Services website www.dhfs.state.wi.us/forms or at county clerk's offices, hospitals and nursing homes, and from funeral directors. **The DHFS form is not mandatory, but it is the best way to be certain that the document is executed in compliance with statute and is legally binding.**

should have an obligation to honor the decedent's wishes, even though they may not coincide with their own.

07 WA 58 includes the option to designate an agent to carry out final wishes or to make disposition arrangements, much like a healthcare power of attorney. The agent need not be a family member.

Wisconsinites now have the opportunity to control one of the most personal decisions any of us can make, be they final rites, or final rights.

Will 3x be the Charm for Rx Ad Ban?

My bill to ban prescription drug advertising again failed to gain traction this session. Although received enthusiastically by many Wisconsin residents, industry lobbyists, claiming interference with 1st Amendment speech rights, did not favor it.

The bill contained carefully crafted provisions to avoid 1st Amendment problems. Commercial

speech differs from political speech. We already regulate lawyer and tobacco advertising, both of which have survived constitutional challenges. The threat to public health and safety posed by these insidious drug ads is too serious to write off as free speech.

Considering the billions spent on drug ads, the enormous cost of prescription drugs,

the lack of affordable health care for many, and the staggering profits realized by drug companies, something is clearly wrong with this picture.

The drug lobby is among the most powerful in the country, but no lobby is more powerful than an aroused electorate. It is David and Goliath. We all know how that story turned out...

Jolene Anderson - UW Madison & Hometown Star

Port Wing native Jolene Anderson, senior guard on the Badger women's basketball team, made history this year by breaking both men's and women's records and becoming UW's all



time leading scorer. She was named Big Ten Player of the Year as well, the first Badger player ever to be so honored.

Anderson led her team all four years in scoring and rebounding and scored in double digits in 118 of her 123 career games. In April, Jolene was drafted by the Connecticut Sun, just the third Badger ever to be drafted into the Women's NBA.

Jolene visited home before heading off to training camp in CT. Surrounded by family and hometown fans, she was presented with a legislative resolution cosponsored by Rep. Sherman and Sen. Bob Jauch, in honor of her outstanding athletic career while at Madison. Ms. Anderson will graduate with a degree in Sociology.

Grandparents Dossie & Joan Anderson, Sherman, sister Janice, parents Jim & Julie, Jolene, and Sen. Jauch in front of the special trophy case devoted to Jolene Anderson in the South Shore High School commons.

Just When You Thought It Couldn't Get Any Worse . . .

Northern Wisconsin Schools at the Breaking Point

Although I have only been in public office for a decade, I have been concerned about the funding of our Northern schools since the 1970s, when I was active in the movement to save the South Shore School District. Since then it has been clear to me that the day of reckoning would come during my lifetime.

Well, the day is here. All over the North, school districts are faced with imminent financial failure:

- The Butternut School District tragically survives on the private charity of a single family
- The failed referendum in the Washburn District leaves them less than 24 months from insolvency
- Mellen, Glidden and Park Falls are considering consolidation, but not sure how to make that work
- Nobody is sure if consolidation will actually result in savings or additional resources
- Several clusters of districts are considering ways of sharing services

There are no solutions on the immediate horizon and none of the options are good. Many Northern Wisconsin school districts are already operating in a single K-12 building. They have cut all non-essential courses long ago, double-graded many classes and cut staff to the breaking point. There is no place left to cut for many of them.

At some point in a small district, all costs become fixed costs and do not decrease with declining enrollment, but under our funding formula, revenue continues to be tied to enrollment.

Consolidation will not necessarily solve the problem and is, at best, a temporary solution – and at worst, abusive to children. If a highly aided district consolidates with one with a low percentage of aid, taxes could actually go up and available resources decline.

Enrollment continues to decline. Washburn is now at the same enrollment it had before Ondossagon's dissolution sent them its enrollment surge.

Every year I have offered legislative proposals

to address school funding, but they seem to fall on deaf ears. As more and more legislators hear from their own over-stressed school districts, maybe we can hope for some movement on this issue soon.

I just hope it does not come too late for Northern Wisconsin's children, our only future.



Mellen High School students graduating in 2008 visit the Capitol as part of their senior class trip.

Constituent Services

One of the most important duties of my office is to help people cut through government red tape. We have many requests and do our best to help. Among our successes are

- We worked with the state High Risk Insurance Board to raise deductibles so a Hayward couple could make their health insurance more affordable.
- A Hayward man was duped into giving out personal information. We alerted him to the possible consequences and worked with him to help him avoid identity theft.
- A Hurley couple was in danger of having their electricity disconnected despite their power dependent healthcare needs. We worked with the power company to halt the disconnection.
- A Cable man was being billed for insurance he had cancelled months before. We got the billing stopped.
- An Ashland woman was having trouble getting her Medicaid scooter repaired. We expedited the process and got it fixed so she could resume mobility in the community.
- A Washburn woman was devastated by damage to her property. We worked closely with her to help her obtain recompense.
- We contacted the Dept of Transportation for information and direction to help both a Birchwood and an Ashland man get their licenses back after revocation.
- We were able to cut through bureaucratic red tape to save a Town of Bayfield business from having to scale back or close down completely.

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