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OR CURRENT RESIDENT

# ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Energy Efficiency and Renewable Power Act

The last two winters have seen Wisconsin ratepayers hit with unprecedented heating and electric bills. The comprehensive energy efficiency bill that I authored is designed to provide long-term economic and environmental benefits. It reforms the state's energy efficiency program by securing funding at an appropriate level and by stopping the fund from being raided to balance the budget. The bill also increases Wisconsin's utility renewable usage to 10% by 2015 to reduce our state's dependence on out-of-state energy. I am confident that this law, which was recently implemented,



will strengthen our power supply, and also help protect our ratepayers, the taxpayers and the environment.

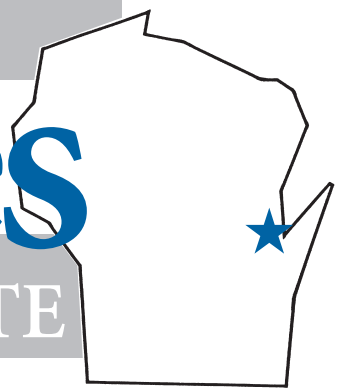
## Great Lakes Compact

The Great Lakes are an incredible natural resource that needs to be protected, and the passage of a strong Great Lakes Compact is needed to ensure that the lakes will continue to be used and enjoyed for generations to come. The Compact was originally signed by all of the Great Lakes governors back in 2005. For the Compact to go into effect, all of the legislatures in the Great Lakes states must pass it, and the United States Congress must ratify it. This spring, I voted in favor of implementing a strong compact, and will continue to work to protect the Great Lakes.



# State Senator Rob Cowles

## 2ND SENATE DISTRICT UPDATE



Dear Friends:

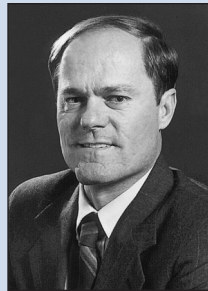
As your Senator, I have worked hard to represent the interests of the Second Senate District. I am committed to controlling state spending, and I work hard to review and question every piece of legislation that comes before the Senate. I feel it is my duty to examine every item that may affect your pocketbook.

Throughout the last legislative session, I heard from you on ways to create more accountability in government, control spending, enhance our energy independence and improve health care. I am pleased that many initiatives to address these issues have recently become new state law.

The input I receive from you, is essential to the job I do representing the interests of Northeastern Wisconsin residents. As always, please feel free to contact me at anytime with your comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. COWLES



## Budget Bill

I voted against last fall's budget for a number of reasons. The budget increased state spending by more than \$3.5 billion, or 6.6%, at a time when people are struggling to pay for fuel, food and other necessities and can least afford it. The budget increased taxes and fees on residents by nearly \$800 million. It irresponsibly increased state borrowing by \$2.7 billion, and raided funds like the Patient Compensation Fund to balance the budget. The budget contained numerous non-budget related policy items that I have consistently fought to keep out of the budget, as those items should be taken up as separate bills. I stand by my vote against this irresponsible budget,

and the recent news that the state is already facing a \$650 million deficit confirmed my fears that this budget was a bad deal for the taxpayers of the state.

# GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

## Newark Decision Bill

I authored this law to close a tax loophole that threatened to result in a massive property tax shift to homeowners. A decision by the state's Tax Appeals Commission in 2004 gave a property tax exemption to a New Jersey-based Milwaukee manufacturing facility based on a 50-year old recycling law. The decision, which became known as the

Newark decision, resulted in over \$34 million in manufacturing property becoming exempt from property taxes. If



Sen. Cowles debates legislation on the floor of the State Senate.



## Government Spending and Accountability (continued)

the loophole wasn't closed, it was estimated that eventually up to \$2 billion in property could have become tax exempt because of the decision, which would then be shifted to home and small business owners.

## Ethics Reform

The Legislature recently passed a comprehensive ethics reform bill that I pushed for. While the compromise bill passed is not perfect, it has many important provisions that will go a long way in cleaning up the corruption in politics in our state. The bill allows for a non-partisan board to investigate ethics and election law violations, independent funding to make sure that all suspicious behavior can be investigated, and if parts of the law are overturned by the Supreme Court, the good parts can remain in place.

## State Contracting Reform

I authored this bill to create more opportunities for competitive contracting with state government. The law provides more accountability, transparency and taxpayer savings. Assembly Bill 105/2005 Wisconsin Act 89 ensures state government contracts are procured and performed in the most cost-effective manner. A complete cost analysis will now be implemented throughout state government because of this new law. A report recently released by the Department of Administration stated that state contracting spending decreased by \$70 million in the first year that my bill went into effect, providing immediate results.



Sen. Cowles and Ms. Daniels and her class from the Ashwaubenon School District.

## Economic Development Reform

This year, I co-sponsored Assembly Bill 741, to reform the state's many economic development programs. The bill increases efficiency by eliminating or consolidating duplicative programs. It also adds accountability by requiring agencies that administer these programs to set measurable goals and to recoup grants and loans from recipients that don't live up to their commitments. I believe that economic development programs are instrumental in building good jobs and having a strong economy in Wisconsin. At the same time, we have to make sure that the programs are working as they are intended to, and that the taxpayers are getting value for their money.

## Information Technology Audit

As a member of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, I routinely request audits on state programs in an effort to find efficiencies and to save tax dollars. At my request, the Legislative Audit Bu-

reau (LAB) recently reviewed the largest state information technology (IT) projects. There have been a number of IT contracting disasters in the last year, and the audit is designed to rein in overspending and lack of accountability. I am continuing to work to make sure that the recommendations of the audit are fully implemented to stop this unnecessary waste.



Pat Finder-Stone of Green Bay presents Sen. Cowles with an award from the American Cancer Society.

# HEALTH CARE REFORMS

## Health Care Transparency Co-op Care Program

The ability of consumers to make informed decisions regarding their health care is limited by the lack of available information and a complex pricing system. That's why I co-sponsored legislation to provide consumers with information about the cost of their health care. The legislation will require health care providers to disclose, upon request and at no cost to the consumer, the charge for a specific service. The provisions of this legislation will empower people to be better consumers of health care by giving them more information. Another bill that I co-authored will create a partnership of health insurers, doctors, hospital and employers. The group will analyze health insurance claims to determine which doctors and hospitals are most efficient. The information from the data gathered can tell doctors and hospitals how to increase efficiency.

I have supported and helped refine the Co-op Care program. Co-op Care will bring existing co-op members and small employers together to negotiate directly with health plans. This community based project gives farmers, small businesses and self-employed individuals access to affordable health coverage, stabilize insurance rates and improve health care delivery in Wisconsin. The Farmers Health Cooperative already has more than 5,000 new members who are benefiting from their ability to pool resources and bargain for the best rates. Recently, Healthy Lifestyles Cooperative of Brown County opened a second purchasing pool in response to the overwhelming success of the first pool. The first pool attracted over 135 Northeastern Wisconsin small businesses and has over 1,300 individual members.



Sen. Cowles listens to testimony during a committee meeting.

## HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

- Aging and Long Term Care . . . . . 1-800-242-1060
- Attorney General . . . . . 1-608-266-1221
- Business Help Line . . . . . 1-800-435-7287
- Consumer Protection Hotline . . . . . 1-800-422-7128
- Crime Victim Services . . . . . 1-800-446-6564
- Dept. of Commerce . . . . . 1-608-266-1018
- Employment Relations . . . . . 1-608-266-1731
- Farm Hotline . . . . . 1-800-942-2474
- Governor . . . . . 1-608-266-1212
- Dept. of Health and Family Services . . . . . 1-608-266-9622
- Housing Loans, Low Interest . . . . . 1-800-334-6873
- Dept. of Workforce Development . . . . . 1-608-266-3131
- Dept. of Natural Resources . . . . . 1-608-266-2621
- Dept. of Public Instruction . . . . . 1-608-266-3390
- Public Service Commission . . . . . 1-608-266-2001
- Dept. of Revenue . . . . . 1-608-266-2486
- Road Conditions/Detours . . . . . 1-800-762-3947
- Tax Refund Information . . . . . 1-608-266-8100
- Transportation/Motor Vehicle . . . . . 1-608-266-1466
- Unemployment Insurance . . . . . 1-800-494-4944



Sen. Cowles discusses the legislative process with a school group from the Second Senate District.

