



Mary Lazich

Wisconsin State Senator • 28th District

Capitol Report Spring 2008

Greetings:

I hope this letter finds you and your family in good spirits and health as we look forward to summer after a long, tough winter.

There has been a great deal of activity in Madison. I continue to be vocal about Wisconsin's insatiable appetite to tax and spend. Unfortunately, Madison has been unwilling to change its fiscally irresponsible habits, approving a state budget last fall that I voted against that increases taxing and spending. Wisconsin must confront an incredibly huge budget shortfall. I hope the \$652.3 million shortfall will serve as a much-needed wake-up call that we must finally get serious about controlling taxing and spending. Wisconsin risks losing its best and brightest, not to mention our valued senior citizens driven to move to other more tax-friendly states.

Much of my time is spent on the floor of the State Senate, serving on legislative committees, researching legislation, and analyzing issues. Representing 160,000 constituents is a major responsibility I take very seriously. Serving you in Madison is an honor and privilege I enjoy immensely.

I especially enjoy meeting and working with so many of you wonderful people in the Senate district, whether it be at town hall meetings, award ceremonies, senior citizen and veterans facilities, Chamber of Commerce events, parades, and other activities. Direct interaction with you, my constituents, and hearing your advice and concerns enables me to provide you with top notch representation at the State Capitol.

Inside this newsletter, I outline some accomplishments and some challenges we still face. Please let me know your thoughts about these issues. Your views are very important. As always, it is a pleasure to serve you.

Sincerely,

Mary Lazich

Mary Lazich
State Senator
District 28



Here is the pledge I have signed with Americans for Tax Reform to oppose tax increases.

The Taxpayer Protection Pledge was started in 1986 as the first project of Americans for Tax Reform. The Pledge reads:

I, _____, pledge to the taxpayers of the _____ district of the State of _____ and to all the people of this state, that I will oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes.

SIGNED

DATE

WITNESS

WITNESS

Highlights of Legislative Sessions

The State Budget

The most important piece of business the Legislature addresses is the biennial state budget. The Legislature was almost four months late delivering the 2007-09 Budget because of the dramatic difference between the budgets proposed by Governor Doyle, Assembly Republicans and Senate Democrats. Prior to the state Senate vote on the budget, Legislative Fiscal Bureau Director Bob Lang reported Governor Doyle's proposed budget increased taxes and fees by \$1 billion, 748 million, the Senate Majority's proposed budget with Healthy Wisconsin, their government health care plan increased taxes and fees by \$9 billion, 511 million, and the Assembly Majority's budget increased taxes and fees by \$256 million.

Ultimately, the Legislature approved and Governor Doyle signed into law a budget that increased taxes and fees by \$763 million. I voted against the budget because it taxes and spends beyond our means. In order to lower taxes in Wisconsin, one of the highest-taxed states in the nation, there must be reduced spending. The 2007-09 Budget expands an already bloated state government and raids the Patient's Compensation Fund.



The Governor used his veto authority to eliminate the levy limit placed on technical colleges. The budget approved by the Legislature had imposed a cap on growth for technical colleges at four percent. The Governor also used his veto pen to relax the limit placed on local governments by allowing municipalities to increase their property tax levies by 3.86 percent or the rate of new construction for 2007.

The Governor's actions almost certainly signal increases in local property taxes, especially for technical colleges that have seen the largest increases of any portion of local property tax bills in recent years.

After the Legislative Fiscal Bureau announced near the end of the 2007-08 Legislative Session that the state has a projected revenue shortfall of \$652.3 million, I went on record opposing any budget repair bill that includes tax increases



Senator Mary Lazich



Constitutional Amendments

Statewide voters approved a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage in Wisconsin in a referendum on November 7, 2006. Over 59 percent voted in favor of the constitutional amendment that I co-sponsored.

I also co-sponsored the constitutional amendment that will prohibit Wisconsin governors, Republican or Democrat, from using their expansive veto power to form new words, phrases or sentences to authorize spending the Legislature never approved. Governor Doyle's use of the Frankenstein veto prompted the constitutional amendment. He used his partial veto 139 times on the 2005-07 State Budget. One of his Frankenstein vetoes increased a transfer from the transportation fund to the general fund from \$268 million to \$427 million.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected the Frankenstein veto in a statewide referendum April 1, 2008. The constitutional amendment goes into effect as soon as the spring election results are officially certified.

Wisconsin missed a golden opportunity to make significant election reform. The Senate Majority refused to schedule a constitutional amendment to require a photo ID to vote. The Senate needed to approve the amendment that I co-sponsored in order for the issue to go to voters in a statewide referendum. The Senate Majority allowed the 2007-08 Legislative Session to end without taking a vote on the amendment. I lobbied aggressively for photo ID, even pointing to studies that demonstrate requiring photo ID's to vote are not hardships or obstacles to voting.

Government Health Care

The Senate Majority put forth a government health care proposal. The cost would be astronomical. The Senate Majority openly admit the price tag of their plan is \$15.2 billion annually. During fiscal year 2006-07, Wisconsin's General Fund of income and sales tax revenue totaled \$12.6 billion. Providing government run health care more than doubles Wisconsin's taxes that are already some of the highest in the nation.

Clearly this would be the largest tax increase in the history of the United States. The \$15.2 billion annual price tag

is nearly two and a half times the \$6.6 billion in state income tax revenue during 2006-07. Government run health care is a boondoggle state taxpayers cannot afford.

Making matters worse, an un-elected, appointed authority lacking accountability would have the decision-making power to adjust benefits and the payroll tax. The authority will not be an elected body and will control \$15.2 billion in taxes.

Ethanol Mandate

A bill mandating the sale of ethanol was considered by the state Legislature.

I understand the importance farmers place on ethanol. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation says, "The use of grain for ethanol adds up to 10-15 cents for every bushel of corn for Wisconsin farmers."

Certainly we all wish success for our hard-working farmers. However, the market should decide ethanol sales to consumers, not the government. The government should not interfere with the lives of consumers by determining the fuel they put in their gasoline tanks.

For that reason, I made the successful motion on the Senate floor during the 2005-06 Legislative session to kill the bill that would have mandated gasoline sold in Wisconsin contain 10 percent ethanol.



The mandate returned during the 2007-08 Legislative Session. The legislation required that gasoline sold in Wisconsin contain up to 25 percent ethanol by the year 2025 with penalties for refiners failing to comply. The state Senate, without a reliable crystal ball, would have legislated into the year 2025 and beyond without knowledge of what energy capabilities or technology will look like decades from now.



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Some of Mary's Bills 2007-2008 Legislative Session

Transparency in Government

Authored Senate Bill 543, which would Google state government spending by creating a user-friendly searchable website showing all state expenditures that would be updated daily. The bill authorizes frequent updates so the public is aware as quickly as possible about state spending. A quick and easy Internet clearinghouse would throw a laser beam on government spending, the increased focus having great potential for significant savings.

Taxation *with* Representation

Authored Senate Bill 258, which requires appointed boards in Wisconsin that have taxing authority be elected bodies. The legislation includes the technical college boards, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District and the Wisconsin Center District Board. If these boards are going to raise taxes, they must be accountable to the people paying those taxes.

Chapter 980 Notification

Authored Senate Bill 555, requiring notice to every address within a one mile radius of a sexually violent person's new address. Families deserve to know a sexually violent person has moved into their neighborhood.

Sibling Visitation

Authored Senate Bill 476, that allows siblings to continue visitation in the event parental visitation is terminated. I wrote the state law that gives children awaiting adoption the right to be adopted into the family of an already adopted sibling. Senate Bill 476 is a logical step to take now that the state allows siblings to be adopted into the same family. Senate Bill 476 allows siblings to continue visitation and prevents children from experiencing further separation, disruption, and confusion.

Coercive Abortion

Co-authored Senate Bill 218 that would prevent coercive abortions and post-abortion trauma. The physician must determine whether the woman's



consent to an abortion is voluntary. A physician counseling a woman considering an abortion shall, in person, inform the woman that it is against the law for any person to use threats, intimidation, force or coercion to compel her to have an abortion against her will. The woman is also to be informed that she has a right to refuse to consent to an abortion, and that a person may not threaten, intimidate, force or coerce her to consent to the procedure against her will.

Highlights continued

The Great Lakes Compact

For a year and a half, I served on the Legislative Council's Special Committee on the Great Lakes Water Resources Compact. The committee was out-



standing, the most meaningful committee I have served on during my years in the Legislature. The makeup of the committee was amazing in that such a varied group of individuals managed to work diligently for countless hours on a critical issue of enormous magnitude. There is not an issue that is more important than the Compact.

Unfortunately, the Compact as written contains page after page of language that is broad and lacks definition as outlined by the highly respected Legislative Council.

The heavy amount of broad language in the Compact indicates this issue almost certainly will wind

up in federal courts for years and years to come. The Compact constitutes make-work for attorneys. I agree that there needs to be a Compact. While I am the biggest opponent to the Compact, I am also the strongest advocate for a Compact that manages our water resources wisely.

The current Compact has major flaws, including the one state veto provision. Allowing one governor from another state to deny a water diversion to citizens that cannot vote for that governor is a very serious problem with the Compact as written. To relinquish our sovereignty to a regional body of governors that can make changes after the Compact is adopted is unacceptable.

Sex Predators

Remember a few years ago busloads of residents stormed a public hearing at State Fair Park to protest a special state committee's thought of building a facility in Franklin to house numerous sexually violent persons? The special panel wrapped up its business without recommending any site in Milwaukee County for a sex predator house.

A flurry of activity ensued at the state Capitol. During the 2005-06 Legislative Session, I authored a key piece of legislation that was approved and signed into law that killed funding for the facility for sexually violent persons and also disbanded the special committee assigned to find a location for the facility. Another bill that I authored that was signed into law makes first-degree sexual assault of a child punishable by life in prison.



I also co-sponsored a bill that became law that requires the worst sex offenders in the state be monitored by Global Positioning System (GPS). These laws protect children. I was pleased to work closely on these bills with Citizens for a Safe Wisconsin.





State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

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How to Contact Senator Mary Lazich

Madison Office:
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Phone: 608-266-5400

Toll-free: 800-334-1442

Fax: 608-267-6790

E-mail:

Sen.Lazich@legis.wisconsin.gov

Website: <http://www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen28/news/>

Blog: http://blogs.newberlinnow.com/conserv_speaking/

Biz blog on Small Business Times:
<http://www.biztimes.com/blogs/milwaukee-biz-blog/authors/senator-mary-lazich>

Committee Assignments

Senate Committee on Judiciary,
Corrections and Housing

Senate Committee on Education

Senate Committee on Health, Human
Services, Insurance, and Job Creation

Legislative Council Special
Committee on Great Lakes Water
Resources Compact

*****ECRWSS*****
RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Toll-Free Telephone Numbers

Badger Care Plus Hotline
1-800-362-3002

Board of Aging and Long Term Care
1-866-843-9810

Business Helpline
1-800-435-7287

Consumer Protection Hotline
1-800-422-7128

Department of Natural Resources
1-888-936-7463

Department of Regulation
and Licensing
1-877-617-1565

Department of Veterans Affairs
1-800-947-8387

Office of the Commissioner
of Insurance
1-800-236-8517

Office of the State Treasurer
1-800-462-2814

Public Service Commission
1-888-816-3831

SeniorCare Hotline
1-800-657-2038

