



# Wisconsin State Senate John Lehman Senator – 21st District

## Annual Legislative Update 2008

### Legislation

The following are some of the bills I've authored this legislative session. For more information about these and other proposals I'm working on you can check my website at [www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen21](http://www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen21) or contact my office.

#### Senate Bill 49

Provides free access to Wisconsin state parks and trails for armed services veterans with significant disabilities or who were prisoners of war.

#### Senate Bill 123

Ensures workers are paid the wages they've earned if their employer declares bankruptcy by requiring their salaries be paid first, before other creditors.

#### Senate Bill 193

Doubles drunk driving penalties for dangerously impaired drivers (persons with an alcohol content at least twice the legal limit).

#### Senate Bill 211

Protects state seniors, consumers and businesses from so-called "check scams" by banning the practice of sending out small denomination checks that, when endorsed, sign a person or business up for an unwanted service.

#### Senate Bill 213

Eliminates the so-called "sick leave perk" for legislators that allows unused sick leave



Senator Lehman testifying before a legislative committee with Republican Assembly Representative Joan Ballweg on legislation to enhance student safety and discipline in our schools.

credits to be used to purchase health insurance coverage after retirement.

#### Senate Bill 237

Makes a technical correction to state law to help the Village of Union Grove move forward with an economic development initiative. The Assembly companion bill I authored with Representative Vos was signed into law as 2007 Wisconsin Act 21.

#### Senate Bill 249

Allows schools to use federal funds instead of local tax dollars to pay for advanced placement and International Baccalaureate exam costs for students.

This proposal was recently enacted as 2007 Wisconsin Act 40.

#### Senate Bill 251

Enables public school academic staff to remove disruptive students from school facilities and events.

#### Senate Bill 259

Prohibits insurance companies from using credit reports when setting a person's auto insurance rates.

#### Senate Bill 299

Prevents the loss of tax savings for Racine County property owners by using the current school aid formula to distribute the school levy tax credit.

#### Senate Bill 374

Protects responsible drivers by requiring anyone who drives to maintain a minimum level of liability coverage.



Senator Lehman and Representative Mason meeting with constituents to discuss state issues.

### 2007-2008 Committee Assignments

- Joint Committee on Finance
- Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules
- Senate Education (Chair)
- Senate Economic Development (Vice-Chair)
- Senate Labor, Elections & Urban Affairs

# Senator Lehman's Annual Legislative Update

## 2007-2009 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The legislature's primary focus during the first part of the session is the state budget. Some of the highlights of the 2007-2009 budget include:

### Strong Schools for Our Kids

- ◆ State funding for K-12 public schools is increased by 4.4%. In total, state funds will cover over 65% of the costs of public schools.
- ◆ Funding for the SAGE smaller class size program in grades K-3, proven to increase student achievement, is increased by over \$26 million.
- ◆ Special education programs will get over \$53.5 million in new funding to provide mandated services.

### Expanding Opportunities for Higher Education

- ◆ The University of Wisconsin's "Growth Agenda" - including UW-Parkside's effort to increase student retention and achievement - was funded.
- ◆ Construction of a new student dormitory and communication arts building at UW-Parkside was approved.
- ◆ Higher education is more accessible by increasing financial aid and creating the "Wisconsin Covenant" guaranteeing a spot at a UW school for every Wisconsin student who maintains at least a "B" average, stays out of trouble and wants to go to college.

### Protecting Our Clean Air and Water

- ◆ The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is reauthorized and funding is increased to help preserve sensitive environmental land and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- ◆ Local recycling efforts are helped with an increase of \$13 million in state funding. Tipping fees are increased to help discourage out-of-state waste from burdening our landfills.
- ◆ Renewable and alternative fuel development is encouraged through new grants and tax incentives.

### Targeting Tax Savings to Families and Seniors

- ◆ No sales or income tax increase.

- ◆ Tax savings targeted to state seniors include an exemption for 100% of social security income and a tax exemption for a portion of pension income.
- ◆ Middle class and working families will benefit from tax credits for health insurance premiums, child care and college tuition.
- ◆ Homeowners will see \$75 million in property tax savings through a new tax credit and caps on local government spending are continued for another two years.

### Expanding Access to Affordable Health Care

- ◆ Every child in Wisconsin will have access to affordable health care through the new BadgerCare Plus program.
- ◆ The SeniorCare program, helping over 100,000 Wisconsin seniors afford their prescription drugs, is fully funded for another two years.
- ◆ The cigarette tax is increased by \$1 per pack to help fund state health care programs. Tobacco cessation and youth smoking prevention programs will receive over \$30 million in new funding.

### Enhancing Public Safety

- ◆ Full funding for a new GPS monitoring system to protect our families by providing intensive, extended monitoring of certain paroled sex offenders.
- ◆ Enhance law enforcement's ability to solve crimes by providing an additional 31 DNA analyst positions in the Department of Justice.
- ◆ Increase investment in crime prevention by providing more drug and alcohol treatment in prison to reduce the number of repeat offenders.

### Building a Stronger Economy

- ◆ Funding was increased for collaboration between private businesses and state technical colleges to provide additional worker training in high demand career areas.
- ◆ The state's Get Lean Manufacturing Initiative that helps manufacturers improve their business practices and profitability is expanded.
- ◆ Additional investment credits were provided to make more capital available to cutting edge start-up companies in Wisconsin.

## RACINE COUNTY PROVISIONS



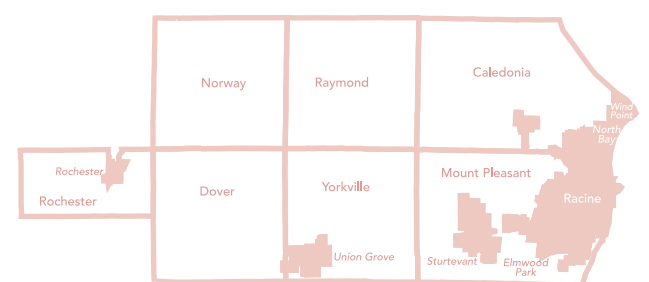
Senator Lehman speaks at a press conference with several of his colleagues announcing his bill to help make sure employee wages are paid if a business declares bankruptcy or closes.

As a member of the Joint Finance Committee and in the Senate, I was able to help a number of local projects and community organizations by securing:

- ◆ A state grant for the Cops n' Kids reading programs.
- ◆ Annual funding for a collaborative project to reduce infant mortality in Racine County.
- ◆ Funding for improvements to 6th Street in the City of Racine.
- ◆ A grant for a job training program through the YWCA.
- ◆ More funding for the children's long term care waiver program to reduce the waiting lists for services to families with disabled children.
- ◆ Start-up funds for a Child Advocacy Center in Racine to coordinate health care, law enforcement and social services for abused children.

I also worked hard to try to pass the proposed KRM rail line to bring jobs and economic development to our area by more closely and conveniently linking our communities to the Chicago and Milwaukee metro areas.

While we were not successful in securing a dedicated local funding source necessary to leverage over \$100 million in federal funding for project development, the bipartisan state and local political support and broad based community backing provides hope for the future of this important project.



21<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

# Share Your Thoughts With Senator Lehman

In order to best serve you, I would like to know your opinion on some important issues facing our state. Please take a moment to fill out this survey, clip, place in a stamped envelope and mail it to my office at the address below.

State Senator John Lehman  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

If you prefer, I would be happy to e-mail you a copy of the survey. You can also find this survey and share your responses by visiting my website at: [www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen21/news/](http://www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen21/news/)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

## How important is it that state government works on each of the following issues?

- 1 = Very important
- 2 = Important
- 3 = Only somewhat important
- 4 = Not very important
- 5 = Not important at all

- Health care
- Crime
- Education
- Taxes
- Environment
- Transportation
- Immigration
- Campaign finance reform

The following are some ideas that are being considered by the legislature to address issues facing our state. Please indicate next to each item whether you support or oppose it.

- 1 = Strongly support
- 2 = Somewhat support
- 3 = Undecided
- 4 = Somewhat oppose
- 5 = Strongly oppose

## Health Care

- Open up the state health care plans used by state employees and legislators to provide a standard package of benefits to all Wisconsin residents, that can't be taken away if you lose your job or change employers or have coverage denied because of pre-existing conditions.
- Require hospitals and others to provide detailed information about the costs of their services and expect consumers to shop for the lowest price for their care.
- Make health insurance coverage available to all children with co-payments and premiums for families on a sliding scale based on their income.

## Education

- Expand the state sales tax to include professional services for things like lawyers and accountants and use the new revenue to remove all local school funding from the property tax.
- Allow local school districts a limited exemption to exceed state revenue caps to pay for things like school security.
- Guarantee a spot at a UW school for every Wisconsin student who maintains at least a "B" average, stays out of trouble and wants to go to college.

## Environment

- Increase the tipping fee charged at landfills to discourage out-of-state trash from entering our landfills and provide funding for local recycling and energy conservation programs.
- Enact state legislation to help address global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Wisconsin.
- Approve the Great Lakes Compact to limit great lakes water from being diverted out of our area and apply new reporting and water conservation standards to large, industrial and municipal water users.

## Taxes

- Target property tax savings to homeowners by exempting the first \$60,000 of their home's value from property taxes.
- Require publicly held companies doing business in Wisconsin to disclose their profits and the amount of state taxes paid and direct the state Revenue Department to make the information available to the public.
- Close a tax loophole that allows some businesses to avoid paying any state taxes by attributing profits earned in Wisconsin to out-of-state subsidiaries.

## Additional Issues

- Prohibit Wisconsin companies that hire undocumented workers from being eligible for receiving any state tax credits or subsidies.
- Require all drivers in Wisconsin to have a minimum level of motor vehicle liability coverage before they take to the road.
- Reduce the influence of special interests in campaigns for the Wisconsin Supreme Court by providing full public financing.

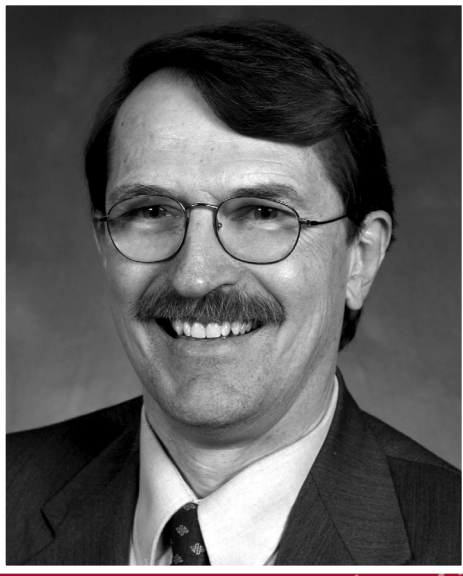


Senator Lehman (seated 3rd from right) at work on the State Budget as a member of the Joint Committee on Finance.

If you have any additional comments, questions or concerns about state issues please feel free to contact me. I'm always happy to hear from you.

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E-mail: [Sen.Lehman@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Lehman@legis.wisconsin.gov)

# Senator Lehman's Annual Legislative Update



Wisconsin State Senate  
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Senator – 21st District

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## How to Contact **SENATOR LEHMAN**

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legis.wisconsin.gov**

**Office Toll Free Phone:  
1-866-615-7510**

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

## Dear Neighbor:

I'm pleased to send this annual legislative update to keep you informed about the issues I've been working on for you and our communities.

As a freshman Senator I was very fortunate to be appointed to serve on the Joint Committee on Finance and Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules, chair the Senate Education Committee and serve on the Senate Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs and the Senate Economic Development Committee. These committee appointments place me in a wonderful position to well represent Racine County citizens.

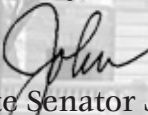
In 2007 the majority of the legislative session was focused on the state budget. Like many of you, I was frustrated by the long delay in completing our work. In the end, I supported a compromise budget protecting priorities like public education and investing in health care, public safety and transportation.

Included in this annual update are brief summaries of some of the bills I've introduced to address issues that you've told me are important to our community.

To date, I've heard from literally thousands of folks at the listening sessions I've held, by letter, telephone, e-mail and at area events. I feel strongly that I'm best able to represent you if I know what's on your mind. I'd greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to share your input by completing and returning the enclosed issue survey.

I'm always happy to listen to your concerns and to try to help resolve issues you may have with state government.

Sincerely,

  
State Senator John Lehman  
21st Senate District

