

UNDER THE DOME

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LINKS

[State Legislature](#)

[MEUW Home Page](#)

[Bills and Topics](#)
[MEUW is Lobbying](#)

[The Wheeler Report](#)

[WisPolitics](#)

Legislative Update

This issue of *Under the Dome* focuses on Governor Walker's proposed 2015-2017 budget, a legislative session update and an update on the PSC's utility billing audits.

Biennial State Budget Unveiled

Governor Scott Walker gave his 2015-2017 Biennial Budget address to the joint legislature on Feb. 3. The \$68 billion proposed package includes property tax and school spending freezes, a \$300 million funding cut to the UW System, no increases in fees or taxes, and consolidation of several state agencies. Based on our initial review of the 1,800+ page budget package, it appears MEUW members were largely spared. However, there are a few proposed items that we will be tracking through the process:

- Public Service Commission
 - Direct the PSC to conduct a study on wind energy system-related health issues and submit it to the governor and legislature within one year after passage of the budget bill.
 - Transfer the State Energy Office from the Department of Administration to the PSC. Seven positions would move to the PSC.
 - Combine the public information officer and legislative liaison positions to save \$184,400.
 - Eliminate positions that have been vacant for 12 months or more; 2.75 positions.
- Department of Revenue
 - Fund an additional 11 positions for the Statewide Debt Collection program.
- Office of the Commissioner of Insurance
 - Eliminate the Local Government Property Insurance Fund.
 - Program would be closed to new policies and existing policies would not be renewed.

The MEUW Legislative and Regulatory Committee reviewed the proposed budget bill at their Feb. 9 meeting and expressed concern about the proposed elimination of the Local Government Property Insurance Fund (LGPIF). MEUW would like to know how many member utilities insure their utility assets or have other coverage through LGPIF to better gauge the impact of this proposal. **Please email Zak Bloom at zbloom@meuw.org if your utility or municipality would be impacted by elimination of the LGPIF.**

The executive budget bill has been introduced in the Assembly (AB 21) and Senate (SB 21) and now heads to the Joint Finance Committee for its review where amendments and changes can occur before being reported to the Assembly for action. The legislature is expected to wrap up its work by the end of May and send the budget bill to the governor for his signature.

2015-2016 Legislative Session Update

The 2015-2016 legislative session is in full swing and thus far the spotlight has been on the biennial budget, school accountability, and potential reform of the Government Accountability Board. The legislature has had several floor days and has marked Feb. 24 through March 5 as potential floor days prior to sending the first round of bills to the governor's desk for his consideration.

MEUW is following a number of issues, including:

- **AB-20 - Made in America Act:** This bill, introduced by Rep. Jorgensen (D-43) and Sen. Hansen (D-30), would require contractors to use materials made in America for all public works projects. The bill was referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations. No hearing for this bill has been scheduled as of Feb. 12.
- **LRB-0698 - Prevailing Wage:** This bill, sponsored by Reps. Hutton (R-13) and Sen. Vukmir (R-5), would repeal the state's prevailing wage laws and local preemption.
- **LRB-0802 - Wisconsin Renewable Energy Development Authority:** This bill, sponsored by Rep. Shankland (D-71) and Sen. Miller (D-16), creates an independent public entity, governed by an 11-member board, to steer and expand investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency in Wisconsin.
- **LRB-1446 - High-capacity Wells:** This bill, sponsored by Rep. Nerison (R-96) and Sen. Gudex (R-18), essentially eases regulation on high-capacity wells due to recent court cases that have changed the DNR's authority to oversee high capacity wells.

PSC Electric Utility Billing Audit Initiative Continues in 2015

In January, the PSC notified nine MEUW members of its plan to conduct municipal electric billing audits. Benton, Hartford, Kaukauna, Manitowoc, Marshfield, Mazomanie, Princeton, Shawano, and Sheboygan Falls were notified of the PSC's plan to audit their utility billing procedures in the first quarter of 2015. This is the second year of municipal electric utility billing audits and a total of 16 MEUW members will have been audited when the PSC wraps up their work later this year.

The intent of the audit is to ensure that municipal electric utilities have proper billing procedures in place so that customers' bills are accurate and consistent with Wisconsin Statutes and the Wisconsin Administrative Code requirements. A subcommittee of the MEUW Accounting and Customer Service Committee prepared model written billing procedures for use by all members, especially those that have been selected for this audit. The model procedures were distributed by MEUW in a member communication email dated Jan. 8. Please visit our [website](#) to download a copy.

*The next issue of **Under the Dome** will be published February 27.*