

# UNDER THE DOME

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## Legislative Update

This issue of *Under the Dome* provides an update on the current legislative session, spring election results, the appointment of PSC Commissioner Mike Huebsch and advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. related to the EPA's Clean Power Plan.

### STATE ISSUES

#### 2015-2016 Legislative Session Update

The legislature continues to focus on the proposed biennial budget. Similar to prior budget deliberations, lawmakers have expressed concern over non-fiscal policy items included in the budget. Of the 49 non-fiscal policy items identified by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau contained in the proposed budget, none directly impact MEUW member operations. You can view the list [here](#).

The Joint Finance Committee will begin voting on portions of the budget on Wednesday, April 15. They will take up the following agency budgets that day: Secretary of State; PSC; State Treasurer; Supreme Court; Circuit Courts; Court of Appeals; Judicial Council; Judicial Commission; Employment Relations Commission; along with two divisions, Lottery Administration and Gaming, at the Department of Revenue. Regarding the PSC's budget, MEUW has learned that the proposed funding of a \$250,000 wind study will be deleted. The I.T. consolidation issue that we have been following will be taken up at a later date under the Department of Administration's budget proposal.

MEUW wrapped up meetings with JFC members to relay concerns regarding the proposal to eliminate the Local Government Property Insurance Fund. Overall, JFC members met with were supportive of eliminating the fund and having the private market supply the policies.

Here is a recap of the issues MEUW is following (recently introduced items are italicized):

- **[AB 156](#) – *Wisconsin Retirement System***: *This bill, introduced by Rep. Thiesfeldt (R-52) and Sen. Petrowski (R-29), provides municipalities interested in participating in the WRS the option to join incrementally by applying the benefit to only newly hired employees while allowing current employees to finish their careers under their existing retirement plan. The bill was referred to the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs but has not been scheduled for a public hearing. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.*
- **[AB 122/SB 80](#) – Road Access for Utility Trucks in Emergencies**: This bill, introduced by Sen. Jerry Petrowski (R-29) and Rep. Mary Czaja (R-35), exempts public utility vehicles from special or seasonal weight limits on class B highways in order to allow these vehicles to operate legally to restore service outages. The bill received a hearing March 25 in the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs. MEUW has registered in support of this bill.
- **[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 has been referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations but has not been scheduled for a hearing. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.
- **[AB 32](#) - Prevailing Wage**: This bill, introduced by Rep. Hutton (R-13) and Sen. Vukmir (R-5), would eliminate the requirement that laborers, workers, mechanics and truck drivers employed on the site of a project of public works be paid the prevailing wage. MEUW has supported similar legislation in the past several legislative sessions as a means for our members to reduce the overall cost of infrastructure

replacement. The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Labor but has not been scheduled for a hearing. MEUW has registered in support of this bill.

- **AB 66 - 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. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.
- **SB 72 - High-Capacity Wells:** This bill, introduced by Sen. Mark Miller (D-16) and Rep. Cory Mason (D-66), establishes standards and a process for designating areas of the state as groundwater management areas, to ensure sustainable use of surface and ground water. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy but has not been scheduled for a hearing. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.
- **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.

### Spring Election Results

Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley was reelected to her third 10-year term on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Preliminary returns show she received 58 percent of the vote defeating Rock County Circuit Judge James Daley. Justice Bradley was first elected to the Supreme Court in 1995.

Former state Rep. Duey Stroebel officially captured the 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District seat on Tuesday. Stroebel will fill the vacancy created by Glenn Grothman's election to Congress in November, and was unopposed in the election. Stroebel was first elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in May 2011 and is the founder and operator of a real estate management and development company.

### Huebsch Appointed to PSC

On April 7, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee approved Mike Huebsch's appointment to the PSC by a 5-0 vote. MEUW and several other groups registered in support for his appointment. His appointment now moves forward to the full Senate where it may be voted on as early as next week.

## FEDERAL ISSUES

### EPA Clean Power Plan

A significant area of focus for attendees at this year's APPA Legislative Rally was the EPA's proposed Clean Power Plan. MEUW members conveyed significant concerns to each of our members of Congress. Those advocacy efforts have paid off. Earlier this week, Sen. Baldwin addressed a letter on behalf of Wisconsin's utilities to Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator. The letter asked that the final rule take into consideration Wisconsin's early action to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions, include tailored interim goals to avoid the "compliance cliff," and provide a reliability safety valve in abnormal operating conditions and emergency situations. We applaud Senator Baldwin's efforts on our behalf and wish to thank Colleene Thomas in Senator Baldwin's office for her assistance as well.

A similar effort is being led by Congressman Sensenbrenner among Wisconsin representatives. A letter was distributed to their offices on April 9. We thank Congressman Sensenbrenner and Todd Washam for their efforts.

***The next issue of Under the Dome will be published April 24.***