

# UNDER THE DOME

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A PERIODIC PUBLICATION FROM THE MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC UTILITIES OF WISCONSIN

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## Legislative Update

This issue of *Under the Dome* provides an update on the biennial budget process, prevailing wage law and WRS legislation.

### BIENNIAL BUDGET UPDATE

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) continues its work on the biennial budget. They have taken up a number of state agencies as of May 8, including the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI). They will review the proposal to consolidate state agencies I.T. activities with the DOA May 14. MEUW has met with several JFC members to express concern over potential impacts to the high level of service utilities and customers experience from the PSC if this proposal were accepted. MEUW will keep you updated on the JFC's action.

### PREVAILING WAGE (AB 32/SB 49)

The Senate Committee on Labor and Government Reform held a public hearing on SB 49 May 5. Randy Jaeckels, general manager of New Holstein Utilities, and Dennis Bednarski, general manager of Oconomowoc Utilities testified at the hearing to present concerns regarding artificially inflated wages and administration of public projects subject to prevailing wage.

A substitute amendment was introduced at the hearing that would repeal the prevailing wage law from local government projects and raise the threshold for state projects to \$1 million for single-trade projects and \$5 million for multi-trade projects. The Senate committee voted 3-2 against adoption of the substitute amendment and the original bill. Republicans Wanggaard and Nass voted in support while Republican Marklein voted with Democrats Larson and Wirch in opposition. Now that the bill and amendment have failed in committee, further negotiations on a compromise will continue. MEUW will keep you updated when appropriate.



Dennis Bednarski (left) and Randy Jaeckels (right) testify during the hearing on SB 49.

### WRS LEGISLATION (AB 156/SB 134)

MEUW's last update to this legislation on April 24 reported that an information hearing was held for this legislation on April 21. Sun Prairie Utilities and MEUW testified at the hearing in support of the bill with adoption of the technical amendment that retains the initial intent of the legislation while eliminating a subjective determination by the Department of Employee Trust Funds.

The Assembly Committee on Urban and Local held an executive session May 5 where they voted unanimously to approve the legislation and amendment. The bill will be referred to the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems where a study will be completed to assess the potential impact of the bill on the WRS.

## LEGISLATION MEUW IS CURRENTLY FOLLOWING

No new legislation affecting MEUW members has been introduced since the April 24 edition of *Under the Dome*. Updates to the following legislation we are currently following is italicized:

- [AB 32/SB 49](#) - **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 registered in support of 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 was approved by the Assembly on April 14, the Senate on April 21, and will now head to the governor’s desk for signing. MEUW supported this bill.
- [AB 156 / SB 134](#) – **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. *MEUW has registered in support of this bill because it provides significant flexibility to the five MEUW members that do not currently participate in WRS.*
- [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 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.

*The next issue of Under the Dome will be published May 22.*