Under the Dome

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A Periodic Publication from the Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin

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

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BIENNIAL BUDGET UPDATE

The Legislature continues to focus its work on the biennial budget; however, passage of the budget bill by the end of June appears unlikely because the Joint Finance Committee has not held a public meeting since May 29. Negotiations continued last week on major portions of the budget including general fund taxes, transportation funding, prevailing wage, and the Milwaukee Bucks arena proposal.

Progress has stalled the last few weeks due to an impasse on transportation revenue negotiations. Republican lawmakers agree that borrowing for transportation projects needs to be scaled back from the $1.3 billion included in the governor's budget. What they cannot agree on is how much and which projects to delay. If legislators cannot agree to a compromise by June 30 (the last day of the state's fiscal year), funding for state operations will continue at current levels until the budget is finalized.

PREVAILING WAGE (AB 32/SB 49)

The June 5 edition of *Under the Dome* provided an update on passage of AB 32 at the May 27 Assembly Committee on Labor. Rep. Jacque called the hearing to join with other members of the Republican caucus to push for full repeal of the law. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Majority Leader Fitzgerald continue to state that they do not have the votes for full repeal of the law and are working on a package of reforms that will be included in the budget.

We know the legislature is considering exempting certain municipal entities from the application of prevailing wage requirements. MEUW along with WRWA have been working together to ask the legislature to consider an exemption for municipal utility facilities. On June 12, we asked for your help to contact your legislators and ask them to support a municipal utility exemption in the prevailing wage reform package. Many MEUW members did so and we thank them for their efforts. There is still time to contact your legislators. Please contact Zak Bloom to receive the sample communication for your legislators.

LEGISLATION MEUW IS CURRENTLY FOLLOWING

The following bills were added to our legislation tracker since the June 5 edition of *Under the Dome*:

- **AB 269 – Funding Postretirement Health Care Benefits:** This bill, introduced by Rep. Thiesfeldt (R-52) and Sen. Vukmir (R-5), would require funding, on an actuarial basis, postretirement health care benefits of local government employees hired after January 1, 2016. The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs but has not been scheduled for a hearing. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.

- **SB 168/AB 271 – Administrative Rules:** This bill, introduced by Sen. LeMahieu (R-9) and Rep. Neylon (R-98), makes various changes to administrative rule promulgation process including legislative approval of rules with a cost impact exceeding $10 million. MEUW is concerned about this bill because the threshold is sure to affect future promulgation of rules to comply with the final EPA Clean Power Plan. The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs but has not been scheduled for a hearing. MEUW has not taken a position on this bill.

Previously Introduced legislation (no updates since June 5):

- **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 has registered in support of this bill.
- **AB 156 / SB 134 – Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS)**: 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 Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs unanimously approved this bill on May 5. The bill has been referred to the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems where a study will be completed to assess the potential impact on the WRS. MEUW has registered in support of this bill.
- **AB 20/SB 176 - 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. 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 105/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 July 6.