

# UNDER THE DOME

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## Finance Co-Chairs Optimistic Budget Deals Can Be Brokered

The impasse on the major budget portions of the state budget continues, however, the Joint Finance Committee co-chairs said they are much closer to working out a deal on education and taxes, and both could be considered by the Committee as early as Thursday. Rep. John Nygren and Sen. Alberta Darling acknowledged the issue of transportation funding looms, with Nygren saying the Senate's position in support of increased borrowing for transportation projects remains problematic. Meanwhile, the Senate continues to dismiss the possibility of increasing transportation revenue, with the exception of tolling. Governor Walker said recently he was open to the idea as well, so long as a portion of the revenue was used to lower the gas tax, and the tolls were placed along the border. On almost all the remaining issues the Senate continues to be more aligned with the governor compared to the Assembly. Competing K-12 education funding proposals had recently elevated that issue, however, Darling and Nygren indicated there is room for compromise. Taxes also continue to be debated, including whether to approve the governor's proposed elimination of the state property tax, personal property repeal, income tax cuts, and the overall property tax level they ultimately will sign-off on. Although July 1st is the beginning of the new fiscal year, state government will continue to operate under current funding levels if a budget deal is not reached by then.

## Assembly Session Scheduled

Legislation limiting the ability of local governments to regulate the attachment of wireless technology to their infrastructure has swiftly made its way through the Assembly and is scheduled for a floor vote when they meet Wednesday. Supporters of the measure argue it will allow for additional deployment of 5G small cell infrastructure to expand access to wireless internet and data services. Small cell equipment is typically added to utility poles, traffic signals, and buildings. Under the bill, standards and fees municipalities can charge wireless service providers are set by the state, however, the Public Service Commission processes remain in place for utility poles. The bill also requires municipalities to allow attachments to support structures and restrictions are placed on the ability to limit public right-of-way access. It also imposes setback requirements for cell towers in residential areas based on the height of the structures. In addition to the small cell bill, the Assembly will consider legislation recommended by a Legislative Council Study Committee that convened last summer, relating to pupil data security and privacy, along with a measure to expand the settings in which chiropractors can perform physical exams, and another to allow for an open hunting season for woodchucks. Finally, a bill aimed at promoting financial literacy in schools and another authorizing financial institutions to conduct promotional prize programs aimed at incentivizing good savings practices are included on the calendar. The Senate has not yet announced their next floor period.

## Justice Gableman to Step Down in 2018

Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman announced he will not seek re-election in 2018 when his term expires in August. Although Gableman did not explicitly say he would fill out the rest of his term, a spokesperson for the court later confirmed that is his intent. Governor Walker released a statement praising Gableman for showing an "untiring commitment to the rule of law and the proper role of the judiciary during his time on the Wisconsin Supreme Court." Sauk County Circuit Court Judge Michael Screnock announced that he'll run for Michael Gableman's spot on the state Supreme Court, saying in a statement his beliefs align with the incumbent's. Screnock has served on the bench since Governor Walker appointed him in 2015. He previously worked at the law firm of Michael Best and Friedrich. Madison attorney Tim Burns and Milwaukee Circuit Court Judge Rebecca Dallet have also indicated their intent to run. The opening will be the first since 2007 when Justice Ziegler defeated Madison attorney Linda Clifford.

## Upcoming Session Days

The Assembly will be in session Wednesday, June 21st.

## Trump Fundraises, Talks Jobs and the Economy During Visit to State

President Donald Trump was at Waukesha County Technical College discussing workforce training and the economy. During his visit, Trump announced he and Governor Walker are engaged in negotiations with a major electronics manufacturer, without naming them, about locating in the state. Trump also participated in a round-table that included a group of 20 participants including state officials, education officials, manufacturing representatives and students, which was followed by a tour of the college. Trump told reporters afterwards that access to training and education is one of the most important issues facing young people, while highlighting a proposal from his administration that would expand apprenticeship opportunities. Later that evening, Trump headlined a fundraiser for Governor Walker in downtown Milwaukee that raised more than \$1 million. The event required contributions of at least \$1,000 for admission and \$20,000 for a VIP seat and a photo with Trump and Walker. Although Walker has not made a formal announcement, he is expected to seek a third term in 2018.

## Board of Nursing Backs Updated Licensure Compact

The Wisconsin Board of Nursing signaled support for efforts to renew the state's membership in the multi-state nurse licensure compact. Although Wisconsin has been a compact state since 2000, updates to the compact are required for the state to continue its membership. 22 other states have passed legislation already, and the compact will take effect once an additional four follow suit. Iowa is the only bordering state currently signed on to the new compact. The Wisconsin Nurses Association and the Wisconsin Hospital Association joined the Board of Nursing Thursday in supporting an updated interstate licensure compact. Under the new compact, licensing boards are allowed to obtain and submit criminal background checks and establish an interstate commission with rule-making authority.

## HOPE Agenda Bills Clear Senate

The state Senate met for the first time this month to consider special session legislation along with several other bills in regular session. They approved in special session two remaining proposals that are part of the HOPE Agenda. Nine other HOPE bills have already passed both houses and been sent to the governor. Under the legislation considered Wednesday, immunity is granted in certain instances to a person for drug possession who calls 911 to report another person experiencing a drug overdose. The other measure would extend Department of Health Services programs currently used to treat alcoholics to drug users, including those in voluntary treatment programs. The Senate also took up legislation allowing people to sell homemade baked goods without a license under certain circumstances and a bill that would close state government offices on Veterans Day. Finally, on party-line vote, they approved a measure that would make technical changes to the state's school choice programs.

## Assembly Passes Constitutional Convention Measure, REINS Act

The state Assembly also met, spending most of their time on the floor debating a proposal that would add Wisconsin to the list of states calling for a constitutional convention on a balanced budget amendment. They ultimately adopted the measure, with all Democrats and seven Republicans voting in opposition, along with two other similar bills they passed relate to what that convention would look like and who would represent Wisconsin. Proponents of the measure argue it will send a wake-up call to Congress to be more fiscally responsible, while opponents argued it would open the door to sweeping changes because once a convention was called, there is nothing keeping delegates from pursuing other amendments to the constitution on unrelated issues. The Assembly also signed off on the REINS Act, a measure that gives lawmakers considerably more power over administrative rules that are written by state agencies to implement laws. The bill would require full legislative approval for any administrative rule that's estimated to cost \$10 million or more to implement. It also gives the legislature's Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules the power to indefinitely block a proposed rule. Having passed the Senate on a party-line vote last month, the bill now heads to the governor's desk.

## Finance Committee Rejects Self-Insurance Proposal

The Joint Finance Committee met to consider state employee health plans and other less contentious budget items. Prior to the budget voting, the committee voted to reject self-insurance contracts that were proposed last month by the Group Insurance Board (GIB) to provide self-insured group health plans on a regional or statewide basis to state employees. The committee then took action on the governor's budget proposal that used \$60 million in savings from the switch to self-insurance are used to fund pay increases for University of Wisconsin workers and funding for K-12 schools. The motion adopted by the committee instead requires the GIB seek \$63.9 million in savings over the biennium from several sources, including negotiation savings, a reserve draw down, and plan design changes, including premiums, co-pays, deductibles, coinsurance, and out-of-pocket maximums, or other means. It also calls for additional legislative oversight on GIB decisions and requires the GIB to review its policy relating to reserves for fully-insured health plans. The Board would be required to submit to the Joint Finance Committee a plan for utilization of those reserves moving forward. To provide for additional oversight, the proposal requires Senate confirmation of GIB members, adds four GIB members appointed by legislative leaders of each party in both houses, and requires JFC approval of any changes to the state group health insurance program. It is likely Governor Walker, long a proponent of self-insurance, will look to modify the proposal with his veto authority if and when the legislature as a whole approves the changes.