

# UNDER THE DOME

August 21, 2017 | Volume 13, Issue 30

A Periodic Publication from the Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin and our government affairs team at The Kammer Group.

## LINKS

[State Legislature](#)

[MEUW Home Page](#)

[The Wheeler Report](#)

[WisPolitics](#)

## Budget Committee to Consider Foxconn Legislation

The Joint Finance Committee plans to hold a public hearing Tuesday on legislation to provide Taiwanese manufacturer Foxconn up to \$3 billion in incentives, according to JFC Co-chairs Darling and Nygren. Although an exact location has not been announced, the hearing will be held in southeastern Wisconsin, where the Foxconn facility would be located. It's possible the committee will also meet later in the week to consider remaining pieces of the state budget, including the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Department of Corrections, and the state Public Defender Office. Co-chair Nygren told reporters the committee is not looking to pass the bigger budget items of transportation, general fund taxes and education next week, however, budget talks have resumed and a deal on all three could be reached in coming days or weeks. Nygren said their goal is to have the full budget through both houses of the legislature by mid-September, while Darling indicated the Senate is hoping to be done by Labor Day.

## Foster Care Task Force to Meet

The Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care is holding its first public hearing Wednesday, the co-chairs announced. The meeting will take place in the Marathon County Public Library in Wausau. Republican Rep. Pat Snyder and Democrat Rep. Steve Doyle co-chair the task force, created to develop ideas to improve the child welfare system that provides out-of-home care for over 7,000 children in Wisconsin. Their goal is to reduce system barriers, reduce government dependence, and update programs to meet the changing needs of parents, children and communities. They held an informational meeting at the end of last month, taking testimony from representatives of the Department of Children and Families, the Wisconsin Counties Association, and the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, among others. Starting in Wausau, the task force will be traveling to five different areas of Wisconsin to hear from participants in the foster care system.

## Foxconn Legislation Passes Assembly

Legislation aimed at landing a Foxconn manufacturing facility in southeastern Wisconsin passed the state Assembly on a 59-30 vote after more than six hours of debate. The Assembly Jobs and Economy Committee approved the legislation on a party-line vote after Democrats offered up 23 unsuccessful amendments. A GOP substitute amendment was approved that would add \$20 million for a worker training program and require that the final contract with Foxconn encourage the company to hire Wisconsin workers when practically possible. On the floor, all but three Democrats, Reps. Peter Barca, Tod Ohnstad and Cory Mason, voted against the bill, while all but two Republicans, Reps. Adam Jarchow and Todd Novak, were in support. Democratic lawmakers vowed they'll continue opposing the measure, with state Rep. David Crowley in the Democratic weekly radio address promising to fight for taxpayer protections, job training, transportation, quality jobs and ensuring environmental safeguards in the bill. The co-chairs of the legislature's Joint Finance Committee have said they plan to hold a hearing on the bill this week. In addition to Foxconn, the Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the violence that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia recently.

## **DPI Outlines Budget Delay Implications for Schools**

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) recently sent a memo to the legislature's Joint Finance Committee warning of problems for school districts if the state budget is not completed by key dates, starting with August 31st, when sparsity aid payments for rural schools will be delayed. If the budget is delayed past September 5th, the DPI said payments to independent charter schools and private schools in the state's parental choice program will be impacted. If the budget goes into October, the DPI will not be able to complete their general aid certification, something they say may result in insufficient state aid deductions, which will increase costs to the state's general fund. Finally, school districts would not be able to set levies incorporating the revenue limit exemption for resident incoming choice pupils and pupils receiving a Special Needs Scholarship, which would result in districts under-levying the costs for choice and charter programs. Governor Walker and Republican lawmakers downplayed the memo, with Walker saying he was confident the legislature will pass and deliver him a budget by the end of summer. A number of school superintendents have spoken out in recent weeks saying the budget delay has created great uncertainty and forced them to put off hiring decisions, while others have said it has not yet created problems but would if the stalemate continues much longer.

## **GOP Lawmakers Introduce Mining Bill**

State Rep. Rob Hutton and Sen. Tom Tiffany circulated a bill to repeal the state's moratorium on nonferrous mining, including metals such as copper and gold. According to the authors, the bill would repeal the existing prohibition on issuing sulfide ore mining permits, DNR groundwater monitoring and modeling would be limited, permitting timelines shortened, along with various other changes to the application, review and permitting process, disposal fees would be eliminated, and a separate process for building sampling for nonferrous metallic minerals would be created. Proponents of the measure argue the current nonferrous mining moratorium, put in place in 1998, has blocked significant economic development opportunities, primarily in northern Wisconsin. They point to Minnesota, who allows for copper and taconite mining, where thousands of jobs have been created. The Sierra Club and other environmental groups have come out in opposition, arguing the law is designed to protect Wisconsin waters from the sulfide material that typically is unearthed by metallic mining.

## **U.S. Senate Candidates Secure Key Support**

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Kevin Nicholson announced fourteen GOP donors and fundraisers who will lead his fundraising efforts, including billionaires Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein, who have already committed \$3.5 million to a super PAC backing Nicholson. Former GOP candidate for governor Terrance Wall is also on the committee, while Mary Stitt, who has worked for numerous Republicans including Gov. Scott Walker, will lead his fundraising team. Nicholson also picked up the support of the conservative Club for Growth group, who have spent millions in recent election cycles in GOP primaries in the state. Although not yet a declared candidate, state Sen. Leah Vukmir announced Beloit billionaire Diane Hendricks will serve as her campaign committee finance chair, while Mary Kohler will be a member. The Hendricks and Kohlers combined have given tens of millions to GOP candidates over the years.