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Strong Budget due to Reform Dividend

(Madison, WI) Representative Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh) applauds Governor Walker's Budget address, which was delivered this afternoon in the Chambers of the Wisconsin State Assembly.

Governor Walker has prioritized K-12 education, which is as it should be. It is my hope that the fiscal analysis will support all of these increases. Innovative proposals for higher education are necessary and in the best interests of students and Wisconsin taxpayers.

The largest challenge is the urgent need for funding our transportation system. We've come a long way from the disastrous Transportation Fund raids under the previous administration. I'm glad to say that Republican reforms have provided sufficient funds to replenish the funds that were raided, and now a Constitutional Amendment protects those designated funds. The time has come to address the problems associated with delayed maintenance and construction. The Governor and I are in agreement that this can be accomplished without a net increase in taxes, but there can be no further delays. I appreciate his statement that, "A solid transportation system is also part of being accountable to the taxpayers. Our budget includes more funding for local governments to fix roads and bridges and potholes than they've seen in more than a decade and a half. It also includes the largest amount ever for rehabilitation of state highways." I will be examining the details of his transportation proposal carefully.

As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Corrections, I am particularly concerned with adequate corrections funding, so I was pleased to hear Governor Walker say, "We also propose expanding career and technical training in our correctional facilities to help transition offenders into the workforce. A good job is one of the best ways to keep people from re-entering the system." The governor's *Budget in Brief* also recognizes the expected increase in prison population growth due to Wisconsin Act 371, so he has allocated over \$3 million for OWI offender services.

Of course, now that the budget bill is introduced, my colleagues and I will spend the next few months going over each facet of the budget, and a number of changes will surely be made. For example, I would like to see more go into the Rainy Day Fund. Overall, however, the governor's speech indicates that the budget is a responsible and innovative plan.

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