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STATE SENATOR

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The GOP Spending Bill Hurts Wisconsin By State Senator Jon Erpenbach

Governor Evers campaigned on a fiscally responsible plan to cut taxes for middle-class families by 10%. Not only would his plan reach around 63% of filers, but it would be fully funded within the State's budget. Our Republican colleagues have decided to support the Democratic Legislature and Governor Evers' vision of a tax cut. Unfortunately, they view capping massive corporate giveaways needed to pay for the tax cut and making smart investments as a non-starter.

Another political stunt to hinder Governor Evers' ability to improve Wisconsin for all, has led Republicans to support a bill that they cannot fund. On January 17, Assembly Republicans introduced a version of the Evers' plan to permanently lower taxes for the middle-class, but they have no plan to pay for the cut moving forward, except draining the estimated balance in the state's general fund (GPR). The Republican spending plan will end up costing taxpayers more in the long-run, in order for Republicans to keep in place tax handouts to millionaires.

The Republicans' spending plan, paired with their Foxconn aspirations, would exceed the expected budget balance before the process even begins. Governor Evers will be introducing his budget in a couple weeks, and the Republicans are attempting to tie his hands. The voters of the state sent a clear message in November that they want more investments in schools, health care and infrastructure, and by spending down Wisconsin's GPR, the GOP would be hindering the Governor's ability to deliver on those needs.

Due to the lack of school aids under former Governor Walker, taxpayers in Wisconsin have resorted to raising their own property taxes in order to ensure our kids have the resources they need. Taxpayers have had to pass \$1.46 billion in local referendums to assist their schools, forcing local communities to approve \$300 million in 2018 alone. Currently, school aids are \$230 million below inflation compared to 2010-2011, and the Republican budget in 2017-2018 devoted the second lowest percent of funds to K-12 schools since 1995. Enough is enough. Taxpayers are making up the difference that GOP lawmakers refuse to, and it is vital that we reduce the burden on property taxes by funding education.

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Additionally, high health care costs are a huge concern for families across Wisconsin. Republicans have continued to turn away Medicaid dollars that Wisconsin taxpayers have sent to the Federal Government, because they are unsure that the dollars will be there in the future. However, they are willing to gamble away taxpayer dollars to appease their corporate donors with an unfunded spending plan.

Their decision to turn a blind eye to Wisconsinites' wishes also shows in their refusal to back out of the lawsuit that would dismantle the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It has been several weeks since my colleagues and I requested a hearing and a vote on this threat to Wisconsin health care. We have yet to hear back from the Republican JFC members on if they are going to move forward with striking down health care protections for the people of Wisconsin. Yet, they have called an "emergency session" on a spending bill that would not take effect until the end of the year.

Our deteriorating infrastructure also proves the Republican's lack of commitment to our communities. The roads, bridges, and highways in our state are crumbling, and many communities are resorting back to dirt roads because they are unable to afford the upkeep. The people of Wisconsin are asking us to make investments in broadband and transportation, yet the Republicans would rather keep in place massive corporate tax breaks than to invest in their districts.

Making substantial spending decisions prior to the budget being introduced is reckless and irresponsible. We will have months of discussions and decision making once Governor Evers introduces his proposal in a couple weeks, and I urge Republicans to join us in coming up with a sustainable tax relief plan. We need to put money back in the pockets of the middle-class, while creating opportunities and growing our communities. It is possible to give the middle-class a tax cut, and make needed investments in our state. It is time that we stop playing politics, and reach across the aisle on real, smart solutions that work for all.

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