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Gov. Evers' Badger Bounceback Agenda Receives Bipartisan Praise, Support

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers on Tuesday this week announced his 2021-2023 biennial budget, laying out his Badger Bounceback agenda to help make sure Wisconsin can bounce back from this pandemic and better than before. Several components of the governor's proposal have received bipartisan praise and support from members of the State Legislature and advocacy groups.

“I’m proud our Badger Bounceback agenda has already received bipartisan support in so many critically important areas,” said Gov. Evers. “As I said during my budget address, I know we can spend within our means while passing a budget with bipartisan support that will ensure our state can bounce back from this crisis and better than we were before. Let’s work together and get this done.”

Economic Development & Support for Small Businesses

In his Badger Bounceback agenda, Gov. Evers doubled down on his commitment to support our Wisconsin families, small businesses, farmers and our workforce, providing the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation with \$200 million to assist Wisconsin small businesses with recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, and creating a \$100 million venture capital program to jumpstart innovation and startup growth in Wisconsin.

- “I appreciate the proposals Governor Evers announced to invest in our public education system, to provide crucial mental health resources to our kids and communities, to reform our criminal justice system, to combat climate change, and to support small businesses in economic recovery.” - [Rep. Vining \(D-Wauwatosa\)](#)
- “It prioritizes Wisconsin small businesses and farms by allocating \$200 million to help Wisconsin small businesses, investing \$29 million for workforce development initiatives, and promoting agricultural innovation & farmer-led conservation.” - [Rep. Hebl \(D-Sun Prairie\)](#)
- “Investing \$200 million to help small businesses will help retain workers and hire back people who lost their jobs because of the pandemic. Additionally, creating a \$100 million venture capital fund will jumpstart tech innovation and startups and begin to build a path forward for companies to create good paying tech jobs right here in Wisconsin.” - [Sen. Ringhand \(D-Evansville\)](#)
- “I have supported investments in economic development, broadband expansion, and sparsity aid for rural schools in previous budgets. These are areas where we can make wise investments and build on past successes.” - [Sen. Testin \(R-Stevens Point\)](#)

Expanding Access to Mental Health Services

In total, Gov. Evers’ budget proposes investing more than \$150 million in initiatives and programs designed to improve Wisconsinites’ access to quality mental and behavioral health services and treatment. This proposal includes expanding healthcare coverage for uninsured and underinsured Wisconsinites by providing more than \$40 million aimed at increasing access to critical mental health services, providing more than \$50 million in school and community-based mental health programming and supports for school-

aged children, and providing \$25 million in strategic investments that will boost front-end preventative services, support regional crisis centers, and bolster alternatives to emergency detention like rapid response mental health teams.

- “Investments in our mental health care infrastructure in Racine was one of my major requests for the new biennial budget, and I am pleased and grateful that the Governor has prioritized this care for adults, youths, and children in Wisconsin. This proposal touches every part of our community, including \$46 million to expand access; \$55 million for student mental health; \$25 million to address substance abuse and the opioid crisis; and \$25 million to reform crisis intervention and emergency detention.” - [Rep. Greta Neubauer \(D-Racine\)](#)
- “I am excited to see an investment in mental health care in the Governor’s Budget. We need to prioritize mental health at the same level as physical health. I am glad to see reforming crisis intervention and emergency detention is a priority for the Governor. I am thrilled to see the initiative to create a real-time tracker of in-patient, peer respite, and crisis stabilization capacity and bed availability to reduce logistical challenges and improve the medical clearance process. This will help our law enforcement officers who transport citizens to health care facilities and help those who are in need of care.” - [Rep. James \(R-Altoona\)](#)
- “Investments in broadband, mental health funding, and increases in state aids to K-12 schools are areas of common ground, so I’m hopeful we can find a path forward in those areas.” - [Rep. Allen \(R-Waukesha\)](#)

Broadband Access

In Gov. Evers’ 2021 State of the State address, he declared 2021 the Year of Broadband Access. The Badger Bounceback agenda builds off the governor’s 19-21 budget by again proposing the largest state investment in broadband in state history at nearly \$200 million—five times the amount invested in the 2013, 2015, and 2017 budgets combined.

- “I’m grateful the Governor’s budget supports broadband investment as much as I do! I look forward to receiving input on the budget from across the state to learn more about Wisconsin’s fiscal priorities!” - [Rep. Magnafici \(R-Dresser\)](#)
- “It may shock you to learn that I agree with @GovEvers on the need to address broadband access. COVID-19 magnified that issue. That’s why I voted FOR funding broadband at a record level in our last biennial budget. I believe it’s an area we can find common ground this session.” - [Rep. Dittrich \(R-Oconomowoc\)](#)
- “Governor Evers delivered a bold approach with this budget. It provides immediate relief and long-term support. Governor Evers’ historic \$200 million broadband expansion investment is just what we need in rural Wisconsin. His \$43 million commitment to bolstering Wisconsin’s agricultural industry is what farmers need right now.” - [Sen. Smith \(D-Eau Claire\)](#)
- “I am pleased to see that Governor Evers is committed to expanding broadband access in rural areas. Year after year, broadband expansion remains a top priority amongst the hardworking people of the 34th Assembly District. After such a difficult year, it’s imperative that we remove unnecessary challenges to small businesses and educational opportunities. Instead, we should provide additional funds to connect rural communities across our state. I am hopeful that the Governor will follow through on his promise to deliver quality broadband access to Northern Wisconsin.” - [Rep. Swearingen \(R-Rhineland\)](#)

- “Priorities of mine in the upcoming budget include expanding access to rural broadband and increasing funding for roads. I agree with the governor that we should increase in funding for broadband expansion. Last budget, the legislature allocated nearly \$50 million for broadband grants and I would support additional investments in this budget.” - [Rep. Plumer \(R-Lodi\)](#)

What's Best for Our Kids

The governor’s budget provides over \$600 million over the biennium towards K-12 education. The governor’s budget increases per pupil aid by providing \$55.8 million over the biennium and recommends over \$709 million for special education aid. The governor’s budget also proposal invests \$190 million in the UW System, and includes continuing the tuition freeze at the UW System for Wisconsin residents while also funding the freeze by providing more than \$50 million over the biennium in unrestricted, flexible dollars to the UW System to ensure they can provide high-quality service without sacrificing affordability, and providing \$20 million in each fiscal year in general unrestricted aid to address operational needs.

- “Something we can agree upon is the continuation of the UW tuition freeze.” - [Sen. Kapenga \(R-Delafield\)](#)
- “Governor Evers’ budget for the UW System will allow us to tackle some of Wisconsin’s most pressing challenges: expanding online education to meet market demands, tackling prison recidivism to save taxpayer money, leveraging our freshwater resources for economic and environmental gain, expanding opportunity for our neediest students. The budget shows that the Governor recognizes the value we can deliver to all Wisconsinites, as we have during the COVID-19 pandemic. Where there is a problem, the UW wants to help – and the Governor’s budget will allow us to do just that on some of Wisconsin toughest problems. We look forward to working with the legislature to deliver a positive budget for UW.” - [University of Wisconsin System President and former Gov. Tommy Thompson](#)
- “[T]here are items in the budget we can agree and build on – like funding our schools and expanding the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program...” - [Rep. Steineke \(R-Kaukauna\)](#)
- “The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the critical importance of our public schools and the impact they have on our communities. An investment into our kids is an investment into our future. That is why I am encouraged to see that the governor’s proposed budget includes a substantial investment to fully fund our public schools and make them whole.” - [Sen. Johnson \(D-Milwaukee\)](#)
- “I did hear some ideas that I think we could find some common ground on, such as a continuation of the UW System tuition freeze...” - [Rep. Edming \(R-Glen Flora\)](#)

Protecting Our Water & Natural Resources

The governor’s budget proposal focuses on combating climate change, preventing and preparing for flooding, ensuring access to clean water, and conserving outdoor spaces. Some of those investments include advancing a suite of administrative rules to address water contaminants like PFAS and nitrates, and investing in programs that help communities recover and rebuild following a damaging flood, we provide the state with a greater ability to effectively respond and partner with local governments.

- “I was particularly excited to see many of the issues I have championed in the Legislature addressed in the governor’s budget. Whether investing in broadband, making college more affordable, capping the price of life-saving prescriptions like insulin, fixing our unemployment system,

- expanding clean energy in Wisconsin, or supporting farmers and water quality, I am excited to advocate for our shared priorities in the state budget.” - [Rep. Shankland \(D-Stevens Point\)](#)
- “It is important that we are working to continue expanding broadband, bettering our roads, providing access to quality education, working to better our environment and clean water and putting an emphasis on our agricultural industry.” - [Rep. Oldenburg \(R-Viroqua\)](#)
 - “I was happy to see that there are items in the Governor’s budget proposal that I believe need to be prioritized. I am certain that we can find common ground with the Governor on issues such as the continued investment into both rural broadband expansion and our technical college system, while also the taking steps to make sure we protect our environment. I am excited to work toward the common goal of strengthening our rural communities and investing in our common objectives.” - [Rep. Dallman \(R-Green Lake\)](#)
 - “There are clearly items in the Governor’s proposal that I feel are priorities as well. It’s great to see that rural Wisconsin is receiving some attention in the increase funding for broadband services, rural school funding and clean water initiatives. My hope is the legislature can find common ground with the Governor on these issues.” - [Rep. Krug \(R-Nekoosa\)](#)

Supporting Our Farmers & Rural Communities

The governor’s Badger Bounceback agenda includes a more than \$43 million investment in Wisconsin's agriculture economy and farm families aimed at expanding market opportunities, supporting new and innovative farming practices, strengthening the agricultural workforce, connecting local producers to foodbanks and pantries, and supporting farmer mental health and wellbeing.

- “Increased investment in rural broadband access along with assistance for Wisconsin’s agriculture economy are a couple of the positive items that stood out to me from tonight’s speech.” - [Sen. Bernier \(R-Chippewa Falls\)](#)
- “As someone who has spent the greater part of my career advocating for our state's family farmers and rural residents, I am excited about this comprehensive, long-term investment. This proposal touches every element of our rural supply chain—supporting farmers, local processors, and rural residents alike. It also brings serious focus to critical issues like conservation and broadband connectivity.” - [Sen. Pfaff \(D-Onalaska\)](#)
- “We are pleased to see Gov. Evers include many agricultural priorities in his budget proposal. Wisconsin agriculture generates \$104.8 billion dollars toward our state’s economy and WFBF encourages this fact to be front of mind as budget discussions progress.” – [Wisconsin Farm Bureau](#)

Gov. Evers’ Budget Address is available to be viewed [here](#), and the full budget proposal is available [here](#).

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