



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

March 22, 2017

Senator Alberta Darling, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Finance  
317 East, State Capitol

Representative John Nygren, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Finance  
309 East, State Capitol

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Nygren:

As the Joint Committee on Finance considers the 2017-19 state budget, it is our responsibility to pass the best state budget for Wisconsin taxpayers, which can only be done with the utmost of sunshine and input. We are therefore writing you today with the following requests:

**Removal of Non-Fiscal Policy:**

For years, it has been standard practice to include non-fiscal policy items in the state budget. At a time when public trust of government is at an all-time low, it should be a priority to limit budget decisions to fiscal matters only. *Will you pledge to remove all non-fiscal policy from the state budget and address it through separate legislation?*

**Committee Business in the Public Eye:**

We are deeply concerned by the committee's past practice of passing detailed omnibus budget motions with little opportunity for public input, often in the dead of night. Last session, the committee passed a 24-page Motion #999, which included provisions to gut Wisconsin open records law, shortly after the motion was made publicly available. *Will you commit to ensuring that no committee action is taken past 10:00 p.m. and that detailed budget motions are made available for public review at least 48 hours prior to the committee vote?*

**Agency Budget Briefings:**

While we understand that Republican committee members are already receiving secret agency briefings as a group, you are excluding both ourselves and the public from these meetings. Additionally, you have not extended an invitation to DATCP, despite two controversial budget provisions that eliminate the Farm to School program and open the door to the transfer of CAFO oversight. *Will you show the public that you do not intend to decide this budget behind closed doors by inviting every single state agency to appear before the committee to present their budget requests?*

Over the next several months, the Joint Committee on Finance will be entrusted to allocate state spending of \$76 billion. That is no small task and one that must be done with the utmost of integrity. We believe these four requests will make a significant impact in passing a state budget that benefits all working families.

Sincerely,

SEN. LENA TAYLOR  
4<sup>th</sup> Senate District

SEN. JOHN NYGREN  
27<sup>th</sup> Senate District

REP. GORDON HINTZ  
54<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

REP. KATRINA SHANKLAND  
71<sup>st</sup> Assembly District