

BUDGET BLOG

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2015

4:22 PM

[We're wrapping up](#)

WisPolitics.com is wrapping up its live blogging of today's budget hearing.

You can view the rest of today's hearing [here](#).

The next hearing is Monday in Rice Lake with a final hearing Thursday in Reedsburg.

-- By Staff

Posted @ 4:22 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

4:19 PM

[Group calls for less spending on road expansion projects](#)

WISPRIG director Bruce Speight said the state doesn't have to raise taxes or spend more to pay for needed road projects, but instead re-prioritize.

"Our state's transportation is crumbling. Roads are falling apart and more than 1,200 of our bridges are failing while the state uses billions of dollars for highway expansion such as I-94," Speight said.

The Highway J Citizens Group committee member Jeffery Gonyo also spoke against highway expansion. He thanked Sen. Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, for rejecting the proposal to expand Hwy 164, while accusing Wisconsin's Department of Transportation of being "out-of-control, fiscally-irresponsible bureaucrats."

He called for the immediate removal of DOT Secretary Mark Gottlieb for his "outrageous tax and spend budget request."

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 4:19 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

3:56 PM

[Hearing extended to 8:45 p.m.](#)

JFC Co-chair Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, has announced the committee is extending today's hearing to 8:45 p.m.

So far, the committee is through a little more than one-third of the 320 people who have signed up to speak. It's also still allowing people to sign up to testify.

"We want to be sure we hear everyone speak," Darling said.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 3:56 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

3:49 PM

[UW student body presidents speak against cuts](#)

Student Body President Joe Sigwarth said students at UW-Platteville strongly oppose proposed cuts in state aid.

"Even freshmen are going around to their classrooms and talking," Sigwarth said.

Kaylee Otterbocher, UW-La Crosse student body president, said that the state needs to continue funding in its future

"These 180,000 of students are future workers and current voters," Otterbocher said.

She said that she chose UW-La Crosse because of its great education for a low cost, both of which she fears will be harmed by the budget.

UW-Milwaukee Student Body President Ryan Sorenson said the proposed budget cut would remove classes from the curriculum and make it harder for students to graduate in four years. He said the campus already has a low four-year graduation rate.

He said UW-Milwaukee contributes \$1.5 billion to the economy each year and was happy to hear that the committee is considering a smaller cut than the Governor's proposal.

"I'm glad to hear some of you have questioned the cut amount," Sorenson said.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 3:49 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

2:54 PM

[Women urge funding to combat drug addiction](#)

A handful of women came to the hearing and asked the committee to consider funding for people battling drug addictions and education against it.

Martha Penkas said that her son had a severe addiction and is thankful that she her family had the money to help him.

"I have been lucky because we spent over \$150,000 on my son to try and get him clean," Penkas said. "Not many families can do that."

She said that she wants to be sure that other families will have that resource.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 2:54 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

2:20 PM

[Stake holders urge support for Bucks arena](#)

Marquette University athletic director Bill Scholl came in support of a new Bucks arena with the men's basketball team currently playing in the BMO Harris Bradley center with the Bucks.

"Marquette's conversations with the Bucks have focused on keeping Marquette as a tenant in the new arena," Scholl said. "We believe that the governor has laid out a reasonable plan to update the facilities for the professional team."

Bob Cook, vice president of the Milwaukee Bucks, the proposal is good for the Bucks and for the state.

"The whole state benefits from the tax revenue the Bucks bring," Cook said.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 2:20 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

1:13 PM

[More than 300 people have signed up to speak](#)

More than 300 people have signed up to speak at today's hearing.

Those speaking now had signed up just before 9 a.m., and more were still coming in to register.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 1:13 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

1:11 PM

[Group asks for more funding for transitional jobs](#)

Conor Williams said he came to advocate for the Milwaukee Transitional Jobs Collaborative. He told the legislators that the group needs more than double of the \$6.5 million per year proposed in the upcoming biennium.

He said that it is vital for Milwaukee as it counteracts actions of violence and crime.

"We help people get work, which is important for reducing incarceration," Williams said.

He cited that Milwaukee has some of the worst incarceration rates for African American males in the nation.

Michelle Higgens was there in support of transitional jobs as a user of the program. She said that the program should receive more funding to move outside of the city.

"We want to remove the boundaries and move it throughout the state," Higgens said. "We want to defeat homelessness and combat the unemployment rate."

She said the program can give four people a transitional job for the same cost of sending one person to prison.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 1:11 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

12:54 PM

[Choice advocates make pitch to committee](#)

Nearly 30 people from various Lutheran schools in the Racine area held the floor for nearly 10 minutes as they made their pitch on the voucher program.

Ciji Pittman spoke on behalf of School Choice Wisconsin in Racine and asked that lawmakers continue to fund the choice program.

"We don't think kids should have to pick their school based on their zip code," she said. "We want to thank you for giving students and parents the choice."

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 12:54 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

12:11 PM

[Milwaukee superintendent encourages lawmakers to invest in education](#)

Dr. Darienne Driver, superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools, said the district has been working hard to improve underperforming schools and encouraged lawmakers to put more money into K-12 education.

"We understand the desire for property tax relief," Driver said. "But we think that people want to invest in education."

She received loud cheers from the crowd after she talked, and Co-chair Alberta Darling reprimanded the audience, though she also thanked all the superintendents who came out to share their opinion.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 12:11 PM | [Permalink](#) | [0 comments](#)

12:02 PM

[IRIS, FamilyCare early themes at budget hearing](#)

IRIS and FamilyCare are early topics with community members at the hearing.

Barbara Beckert, the Milwaukee office director for Disability Rights of Wisconsin, talked about the need of these care programs. A few dozen people stood in solitude with her.

"Please reconsider, please take this out of the budget," she told the committee. "We want to roll up our sleeves and work with you on this."

With the hearing at Alverno College, some Milwaukee issues were brought to the committee's attention.

Dr. Eve Hall, president and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce, applauded the committee its efforts to work with Milwaukee on building a new arena for the Milwaukee Bucks arena.

"Its another venue for jobs and contracts bringing in new business and supporting businesses already in the area," she said.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 12:02 PM / [Permalink](#) / [0 comments](#)

10:55 AM

[Nygren supports more money for DOJ to investigate officer involved shootings](#)

Ahead of today's hearing, Co-chair John Nygren, R-Marinette, released a statement backing additional resources for the Department of Justice to investigate officer involved shootings.

The announcement comes on the heels of an uproar in Madison over the shooting of a biracial teen.

Nygren noted last May alone the DOJ was conducting five different investigations of officer involved shootings.

"As a lawmaker, it's my duty to help ensure that incidents like these are investigated with the utmost integrity," Nygren said. "It is for this reason that I support offering the DOJ additional resources that will help with their ongoing and future investigations of officer involved incidents."

"I intend to discuss this issue further with my colleagues on the Joint Finance Committee as we continue with the state budget process."

-- By Staff

Posted @ 10:55 AM / [Permalink](#) / [0 comments](#)

10:14 AM

[Milwaukee public hearing on budget opens](#)

Today's Joint Finance public hearing on the budget is underway.

Co-chair Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, laid down the same ground rules as were in effect for Wednesday's hearing. That means everyone gets two minutes to speak and five minutes if they are in a group of three or more.

-- By Jordyn Noennig

Posted @ 10:14 AM / [Permalink](#) / [0 comments](#)

http://budget.wispolitics.com/2015_03_01_archive.html