

State Budget Recommendations

From the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

Voting Rights

1. Pass the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact legislation.
2. Ensure accessible sample ballots, non-English language ballots and non-English voter instructions on MyVote.WI.gov.
3. Sufficient funding to ensure that Wisconsin elections provide voters with maximum opportunity for registration, voting at the polls, and absentee voting. This should include funding for election security and voting access, election administration, access to the ballot for jailed voters, and voter education at the state and local levels.
4. Full funding for the creation of an Elections Inspector General program at the Wisconsin Elections Commission to deal with election inquiries.
5. Funding for public education to voters regarding awareness and the need for an Independent Nonpartisan Redistricting Commission to be created for new legislative and congressional maps pursuant to the 2030 Census.
6. Funding for organizing and developing an Independent Nonpartisan Redistricting Commission for preparation of legislative and congressional maps pursuant to the data from the 2030 Census which will involve financing for commissioners, experts in map development and legal issues, publicity and multiple venues for public input in the creation of the maps, etc.
7. Wisconsin should end prison gerrymandering. In Wisconsin's 2021 redistricting cycle, 32,853 incarcerated people were counted as residing at their places of incarceration and not at their last known addresses. This choice undermines one person, one vote as captured in the Voting Rights Act.
 - a. The disproportionate impact is seen at all levels of government - in Congressional District 6, 12,416 incarcerated people were counted while District 5 contained only 851. In State Assembly District 37, 4,403 were counted while 36 districts contained 0 incarcerated people. Wisconsin's communities should benefit fairly from the federally appropriated funds determined by the Census Bureau.

Economic Security and Social Justice

1. Taxation

- a. Maintain a tax system adequate to raise the revenues necessary to fund essential governmental services including but not limited to public education, healthcare and environmental protection.
- b. Increase the progressivity of the tax system through the targeted expansion of programs including but not limited to the Homestead Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

2. Childcare and Families

- a. Ensure accessible, affordable, and quality childcare available statewide through legislation that takes the necessary steps to support and sustain existing Wisconsin child care providers and supports development of childcare centers where childcare deserts exist.
- b. Sustain and promote safety net programs for children and families that provide well being and meet basic human needs, including but not limited to paid family leave.

3. Equal Rights Amendment

- a. Advocate for removing the deadline for the ratification of the ERA to clarify the legal status of sex and gender discrimination.
- b. Advocate for treating sex and gender as a category that is subject to the highest judicial standard of review of strict scrutiny to constitutionally guarantee zero tolerance for sex and gender discrimination.

4. Labor Rights

- a. Substantially increase the minimum wage.
- b. Restore full collective bargaining for public employees.

5. Housing

- a. Increase the state housing tax credit and expand eligibility for low- to moderate-income families.
- b. Fully fund the state housing tax credit and the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and ensure adequate sum sufficient bonding capacity for Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA).
- c. Fully fund support for workforce and affordable housing rehabilitation and development programs with WHEDA and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) including but not limited to;
 - i. Fully funding and increasing capital reserve bonding authorization, increasing and fully funding the residential housing infrastructure revolving loan fund, increasing and fully funding the Main Street Housing

Rehabilitation revolving loan fund, and increasing and fully funding the Commercial-to-Housing Conversion revolving loan fund.

- d. Expand funding capacity and eligibility for homeownership mortgage assistance programs for low-income families and increase commercial lending volume including multifamily housing and economic development.
 - e. Funding for programs that increase and preserve the supply of multifamily housing for low- and moderate-income families, seniors, and veterans.
 - f. Funding for programs to connect affordable housing with services, including those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and that provide access to childcare, healthcare, and public transportation.
 - g. Funding for programs that encourage housing development in areas of economic opportunity and rural locations, and coordinate housing development with community development plans.
 - h. Grant program and state funding to support voting rights for the homeless and housing insecure.
6. Criminal Justice
- a. Prioritize rehabilitation to reduce recidivism and reduce the prison population.

Natural Resources

1. PFAS
- a. Provide funds over the biennium to establish Wisconsin state drinking and groundwater standards for PFAS in line with EPA standards.
 - b. Provide funds over the biennium for a rural grant program for the testing of PFAS by private residents who are adjacent to areas where PFAS has been found/discharged to be reimbursed for sampling.
 - c. Provide funds to establish standards and practices related to PFAS disposal, including but not limited to biosolids.
2. Energy and Infrastructure
- a. Provide funds over the biennium to establish grants for municipalities, counties, and Tribal Nations for implementing strategies to reach carbon reductions to those recommended by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
 - b. Provide funds to implement high-speed (bullet trains) passenger rail between Milwaukee and Madison, Milwaukee and Green Bay, and Milwaukee and Chicago.
 - c. Provide grants to purchase high quality air monitoring devices in every municipality, county, and every Tribal Nation to better monitor local air quality.

- d. Provide grants for every municipality and school district to upgrade the air quality in all school buildings, and local, county, and state governmental buildings.
 - e. Fund data collection on Schools' physical infrastructure and building performance (indoor air quality) on which to base policy decisions. ASCE-WI Section in their 2024 Report Card on Wisconsin's Infrastructure gave Schools an incomplete (I) grade because of inadequate data:
<https://infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/wisconsin/>.
 - f. Support implementation guidance that sets criteria for a building with zero emissions from energy used for building operations and the DOE's Decarbonizing the U.S. Economy by 2050: A National Blueprint for the Building Sector.
<https://www.energy.gov/>.
 - g. Support the WI Clean Energy Plan and its benchmarks.
3. Restoring and Conserving Ecosystems/Wildlife Habitats
- a. Continue full funding the Knowles-Nelson grants for land and water conservancy projects and support funding for habitat management.
 - b. Provide funding to local land and water conservancies and non-profits for establishing native plant seedlings, which will be planted along shorelines for wetland conservation and flood prevention, and native seedlings destined for tall-grass prairies to conserve the health and well-being of Wisconsin's soil.
 - c. Develop funding mechanisms to reverse the neglect suffered by state and local parks in Wisconsin, due to reductions in government funding at all levels, according to the ASCE-WI 2024 Infrastructure Report Card:
<https://infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/wisconsin/>.
 - d. Support adequate funding to sustain the Fish and Wildlife Fund of the Conservation Fund.

Healthcare

1. Medicaid/BadgerCare
- a. Expand Medicaid to include all eligible Wisconsinites as specified in the Affordable Care Act.
 - b. Raise Medicaid reimbursement rates to be at least on par with surrounding states.
 - c. Expand BadgerCare coverage to include one-year postpartum care.
 - d. Provide BadgerCare Purchase Option.

2. Reproductive Healthcare

- a. Ensure that reproductive health services are available to all persons in medical and/or financial need, including but not limited to contraception, abortion services, prenatal and postpartum care and sexually transmitted disease testing.
- b. Increase funding for publicly funded medical family planning clinics in Wisconsin to provide free or reduced fees to persons in medical and/or financial need.
- c. Ensure that the healthcare providers can safely and legally provide comprehensive reproductive services, including but not limited to abortion, to Wisconsinites and to persons traveling from states where abortion or other reproductive services are not legal.
- d. Ensure that OB/GYN medical residents in the state of Wisconsin receive thorough and comprehensive training in reproductive health services, including but not limited to abortion care.

3. Public Health

- a. Strengthen public health departments' role in communicable disease prevention/surveillance.
- b. Expand testing and remediation for PFAS, lead, nitrates, pesticides, and other contaminants to ensure drinking water and air quality.
- c. Provide funds over the biennium to monitor water and air standards and implement remediation of contaminated sites where a responsible party cannot be identified, or the responsible party does not have the funds to remediate the site or sites.
- d. Increase funding for programs to eliminate all sources of lead poisoning in Wisconsin's children.
- e. Support comprehensive plans to be developed by municipalities to assess impact of climate change on the health of communities.

4. Delivery of Health Care to Wisconsin Residents

- a. Increase funding for programs, especially free and charitable clinics, to better serve communities that are currently underserved for financial, geographic or other reasons.
- b. Expand support for healthcare, including but not limited to dental care, training programs for providers that are in short supply and provide incentives to practice in underserved areas and among underserved populations.
- c. Ensure equal and private access to healthcare services for gender nonconforming youths and adults.
- d. Provide humane treatment and adequate healthcare of all people incarcerated. This includes ending prolonged solitary confinement and banning the shackling of pregnant women.

5. Mental Health

- a. Provide mental health parity with established physical health access and services.
- b. Provide that Medicaid covers the cost of mental health care. The first step is for the state to contract for a study of the cost of community based care.
- c. The state should cover the non-federal Medicaid share for Community Support Programs (CSP) offered through county human service agencies. This would provide consistent access to evidence-based treatment for serious mental illness.
- d. Increase GPR allocations for the Crisis Urgent Care and Observation Centers(CUCOF) to allow for at least one fully funded CUCOF in each of the five DHS regions.
- e. Allocate recurrent GPR dollars sufficient to fund the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline on an ongoing basis.

Education

1. Restore state funding for public K12 education and UW System, which would be equitable, adequate, transparent, predictable, and fair state funding.
2. An increase in the state reimbursement of K12 public school districts' special education costs. Closing the special education funding gap by providing public school students the same 90% reimbursement given to private school voucher students would transform outcomes for all students statewide.
3. Get additional resources into public K12 classrooms by increasing spendable state funds by raising revenue limits and adjusting for inflation. General school district revenues per pupil lag inflation by more than \$3,300/pupil since 2009.
4. Align priority public K12 spending to priority needs with adequate funding for: English language learning, mental health support, students in poverty, students with disabilities, school nutrition and student hunger, rural schools and low-revenue limit districts, early childhood/pre-K and higher education, and attracting and retaining educators.
5. End voucher expansion. Accountability for all public dollars and a moratorium on private voucher and independent (non-district) charter spending.
6. Ensure equal opportunities and freedom to learn for gender nonconforming students.
7. Protect school materials from unnecessary interference from the legislature.