

CAPITOL UPDATE

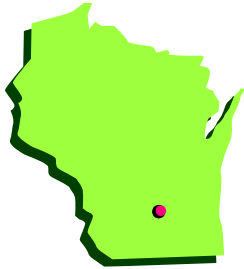
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2005-06 Session Concludes



Both the Assembly and Senate formally adjourned their legislative sessions for 2005-2006. Legislative committees may continue to meet for the remainder of the year, but legislators have limited ability to take official action on any measure. This means that bills that have not passed both houses will be considered “dead” for the session. If legislators wish to pursue bills that were not approved, these proposals will need to be reintroduced during the next session, which begins in January of 2007.

This edition of the Capitol Update summarizes a few of the key legislative proposals that the WJC worked on over the two year session.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights Fails

Once again the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) was a very hot topic at the Capitol. TABOR has been introduced in several forms over the years, but all have the following features in common: an amendment to the State’s constitution to place strict, formula-driven limitations on state and local governments’ ability to raise revenue and allow that formula to be exceeded only through a public referendum. The Wisconsin Jewish Conference is opposed to the concept of TABOR for many reasons, primarily that the constitution is not the place for complex fiscal policy and that TABOR will have a negative impact on the full range of Wisconsin’s safety net social programs, K-12 public education, the university system, and other publicly funded programs.

A new proposal was unveiled in February called the Taxpayer Protection Amendment (TPA), which became the focus of the debate this session. On May 4, the Senate failed to pass the TPA by a vote of

11-21, effectively killing it for the session. The Assembly approved an amended version of the measure in the early hours of April 28 by a vote of 50-48. This differed from earlier versions of TPA and TABOR in that it applied only to state government. Local governments would have been exempt from the revenue controls. Before this vote, a much more restrictive version of the TPA that did apply to local governments failed in the Assembly by a wide margin of 32 in favor and 66 opposed.

“BCE” Textbook Bill Goes Nowhere

In January 2006, Senator Tom Reynolds (R-West Allis) introduced a bill that would prohibit a school board from adopting any textbook that uses the terms “CE” or “common era,” and “BCE” or “before the common era,” instead of “AD” and “BC,” when referring to years. The proposal, formally known as Senate Bill 506, had a public hearing in the Sen-

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“BCE” Bill

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ate Committee on Education. Despite Senator Reynolds' statement at the beginning of the hearing that he was very surprised that anyone would object to the idea, WJC and others from the faith community opposed the measure. It never came up for vote in committee and is dead for this legislative session.

Concealed Carry Shot Down Again

Legislation to allow the concealed carry of weapons in Wisconsin, which the WJC opposed, failed after the Legislature narrowly sustained the Governor's veto for the second straight session. Both houses of the Legislature easily approved Senate Bill 403, introduced by Senator Dave Zien (R-Eau Claire) and Representative Scott Gunderson (R-Waterford). Governor Doyle vetoed the bill, and the Senate voted 23-10 to override the veto (22 votes are needed for an override). The bill then moved back to the Assembly, which came two votes short of the 66 votes necessary for an override after two Democrats who supported the bill when it first passed the Assembly changed their votes to support the Governor. They are Terry Van Akkeren of Sheboygan and John Steinbrink of Pleasant Prairie. Governor Doyle also vetoed a concealed carry bill last session, and although the Senate voted to override the veto, the attempt failed in the Assembly by one vote.

Marriage Amendment Heads To Final Stage—Statewide Vote

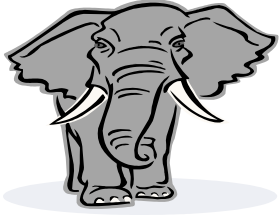
The Wisconsin Jewish Conference opposes the proposal to amend the State constitution to prohibit same sex marriages and possibly all forms of civil unions in Wisconsin. After easily passing both Assembly and Senate in two consecutive sessions, the amendment now heads for the final step in its ratification, a statewide referendum that will be on the November 2006 ballot. The amendment reads, “Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state.”

Death Penalty Referendum on November Ballot

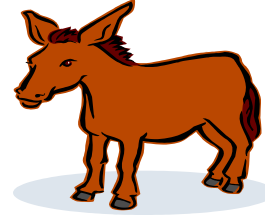
Rather than introducing a bill to establish the death penalty in Wisconsin, which has repeatedly failed in the past, death penalty proponents introduced a resolution early in the legislative session that would require a statewide advisory referendum calling for the death penalty in certain cases. Senate President Alan Lasee (R-De Pere) introduced the resolution, which in its original form called for a referendum endorsing the death penalty in cases involving a person who is convicted of multiple first-degree intentional homicides if the homicides are “vicious” and the convictions are supported by DNA evidence. Death penalty opponents are concerned that a referendum supporting the death penalty will put a great deal of pressure on some lawmakers to support subsequent legislation. WJC opposes any efforts to bring the death penalty back to Wisconsin.

The Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy held a public hearing last December at which the Wisconsin Jewish Conference registered in opposition to the proposal. The full Senate approved an amended version of the resolution by a vote of 20-13, and the Assembly further amended and passed SJR 5 in early May by a vote of 47-45. The Senate agreed with those changes very late in the session.

The Senate Judiciary committee initially amended the proposal to change the language to allow the death penalty for a person convicted



Election Overview



2006 is a very important election year. Here is a summary of some important legislative races around Wisconsin.

Assembly

Current Makeup: 60 Republicans, 39 Democrats. Assembly representatives serve two year terms; all seats are up for election. Thus far, nine Republicans and one Democrat have announced that they will not seek reelection.

Open Seats:

- **District 6:** Representative **John Ainsworth** (R-Shawano) is not seeking reelection after 16 years in the Assembly.
- **District 23:** Representative **Curt Gielow** (R-Mequon) is leaving the Legislature after two terms
- **District 29:** Representative **Andy Lamb** (R-Menomonie) will not seek reelection after only one term.
- **District 37:** Representative **David Ward** (R-Fort Atkinson) will not run after serving seven terms.
- **District 40:** Representative **Jean Hundertmark** (R-Clintonville) will give up her seat to run for Lieutenant Governor against incumbent Barbara Lawton. She served four terms in the Assembly.
- **District 54:** Representative **Gregg Underheim** (R-Oshkosh) is retiring after serving 19 years in the Assembly.
- **District 56:** Representative **Terri McCormick** (R-Appleton) will give up her Assembly seat to challenge John Gard in the race for the 8th Congressional Seat.
- **District 62:** Representative **John Lehman** (D-Racine) will leave the Assembly after ten years to run for the State Senate seat being vacated by Cathy Stepp.

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Senate

Current Makeup: 19 Republicans, 14 Democrats. Senators serve four year terms; odd numbered districts are up for election.

At this point, only one Senator, **Cathy Stepp** (R-Sturtevant) has announced that she will not seek reelection. The race to replace her will feature Racine County Executive **William McReynolds** against departing State Representative **John Lehman**. This will be one of the most closely watched Senate races.

According to a recent interview, Senate Minority Leader Judy Robson (D-Beloit), said other seats that Democrats will target are those held by Senators **Dave Zien** (Eau Claire), **Ron Brown** (also from Eau Claire), **Tom Reynolds** (West Allis), and **Joe Leibham** (Sheboygan). Meanwhile, Majority Leader Dale Schultz (R-Richland Center), also in a recent interview, said that Republicans believe their best chances for gaining seats are in the districts of Senators **Robert Jauch** (Poplar) and **Russ Decker** (Schofield).

The Darfur Action Coalition is actively recruiting coalition representatives and interested individuals to help as we move our awareness and action agenda forward this summer. This will be a critical time to continue our efforts.



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Death Penalty

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of a single first-degree intentional homicide, rather than multiple first-degree intentional homicides. A further amendment on the Senate floor placed the referendum on the September, 2006 primary ballot. The Assembly amendment put the referendum on the November 2006 general election ballot and modified the question to remove the language relating to the homicide being "vicious."

The WJC is now active in a statewide coalition which will mount efforts to defeat the referendum in November.

Assembly Open Seats

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- **District 89:** Assembly Speaker **John Gard** is giving up his Assembly seat to run for the House of Representatives seat being vacated by Mark Green who is running for Governor. Gard was first elected in a special election in October 1987.
- **District 98:** Former Speaker, **Scott Jensen**, resigned his seat after being convicted of three felonies in the caucus scandal.

There are 14 seats held by Republicans in areas where John Kerry received more votes than George Bush in 2004 and 5 seats held by Democrats that Bush won. Assembly Majority Leader Jim Kreuser (D-Kenosha) has indicated that races Democrats will be most active in are the open seats currently held by **Gregg Underheim** and **Andy Lamb** as well as those seats held by incumbent representatives **Karl Van Roy** and **Peggy Kwawczyk** (both of Green Bay), **Robin Kreibich** (Eau Claire), **Jeff Wood** (Chippewa Falls), **Mark Pettis** (Hertel), **Kitty Rhoades** (Hudson), **Steve Freese** (Dodgeville), and **Gabe Loeffelholz** (Platteville).

Meanwhile Assembly Majority Leader (and possibly the next Speaker) Mike Huebsch (R-West Salem) says the Republican's best chances to pick up seats are in the districts of representatives **Bob Ziegelbauer** (Manitowoc) who is now also serving as Manitowoc County Executive, **Tom Nelson** (Kaukauna), **Tony Staskunas** (West Allis) and **David Cullen** and **Peggy Krusick** (both of Milwaukee).

THE WISCONSIN JEWISH CONFERENCE:

- *Serves as a clearinghouse to address important public policy issues*
- *Actively continues efforts to preserve the separation of church and state*
- *Works with local communities to respond to acts of discrimination and anti-Semitic incidents*
- *Monitors legislative activity and engage in coalition building*