

CAPITOL UPDATE

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

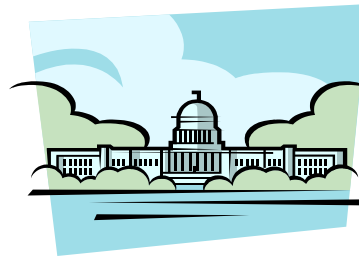
SPRING, 2005

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

State Budget Process In Full Swing Governor's Budget Moves to Legislature

Governor Doyle introduced his 2005-2007 budget proposal on February 8, 2005. The measure is formally 2005 AB 100, a 1132-page document available online at www.legis.state.wi.us/2005/data/AB-100.pdf.

AB 100 has been referred to the Joint Committee on Finance. In March, the committee is conducting a series of public hearings, at various locations throughout the state (see schedule below). The first hearing was held on March 9



in Watertown.

The hearings give the public the opportunity to comment on any provisions of the budget. Following these hearings, Joint Finance will begin the extensive process of marking-up the bill, ultimately approving an amended version. This modi-

(Continued on page 2)

2005-2007 State Budget	1
Joint Finance Hearing Schedule	1
Reproductive Rights	2
Jewish Legislative Day	2
Property Tax Freeze	3
Budget Items of Interest to WJC	3
Death Penalty	4
Voter ID	4
Divestment in Israel	4
Annual JCPA Plenum	5

Joint Finance Public Hearing Schedule

March 11 (Friday)

Cleveland

12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Lakeshore Technical College
Multi-Purpose Room
1290 North Avenue
Cleveland, WI 53015-1414
Phone: (920) 693-1000

March 14 (Monday) -

Menomonie

3 p.m. - 8 p.m.

UW-Stout
Memorial Student Center -
Great Hall
302 Tenth Avenue, East
Menomonie, WI 54751

March 15 (Tuesday) Merrill

12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Prairie River Middle School,
Auditorium
106 N. Polk St.
Merrill, WI 54452
Phone: (715) 536-9593

March 17 (Thursday) -

Madison

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

State Capitol, Room 412 East



Budget Process

(Continued from page 1)

fied version of the measure will then be sent, probably in June, to both houses of the Legislature for further amendments and passage. After the Legislature approves the budget, the Governor will have a month to review the changes and make decisions about any vetoes before he signs the bill into law. The new biennium begins July 1, 2005 and ends June 30, 2007.

Information about the budget

is currently available on the Governor's website at www.wisgov.state.wi.us/budget.asp. Further analysis of the proposal is available from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau on their 2005-2007 budget page, www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/LFBPublications_ButtonPages/Publications_2005-07budget.htm.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS UPDATE

Although the 2005-2006 session is still young, there has already been two pieces of legislation introduced that affect reproductive rights. The first, AB 142, and its Senate companion, SB 72, would expand several prohibitions on organizations or affiliates that engage in abortion-related activities from receiving public funds and from using other public or private funds for abortion-related activities. It also imposes many restrictions on how organizations affiliate, what information they

JEWISH LEGISLATIVE DAY SET

On Tuesday April 12, 2005, representatives of the Jewish community will gather in Madison for the biennial Jewish Community Legislative Day.

Every two years, the Wisconsin Jewish Conference, along with several Milwaukee and Madison area Jewish organizations, sponsors this all-day event. Participants will be briefed on issues of importance to the Jewish community, including budget issues (Medicaid, BadgerCare, SeniorCare, funding for elderly and disabled transportation, etc.) and stem cell research. Briefings will be provided before meeting with legislative leadership and individual legislators to discuss these issues. Participants will also receive a briefing packet.

The day will include lunch at the Madison Club, featuring a speaker on stem cell research, followed by dessert and music from world-renowned musician and Wisconsin native, Ben Sidran. The day will conclude with a tour of the recently opened, state of the art, Overture



Center for the Performing Arts. The cost for the day is \$25 and includes both lunch and materials. Jewish Legislative Day has been a great success and a lot of fun in the past. Jewish activists from all across Wisconsin are strongly encouraged to attend. If you would like more information, contact WJC Executive Director, Michael Blumenfeld, at (608) 257-1888 or mblumenfeld@mblumenfeld.com.

PROPERTY TAX FREEZE PASSES LEGISLATURE

The issue of a property tax freeze remains a hot topic. Governor Doyle has proposed a freeze as part of his budget bill. Meanwhile, a proposal supported by legislative leadership has been approved by both houses of the Legislature. On February 17th, the Assembly approved Assembly Bill 58, a new plan to place controls on local property taxes, by a vote of 58-37 (Republicans voting in favor, and Democrats and one Republican voting against). The Senate agreed to the provisions of AB 58 on February 22nd, by a vote of 20-13 (Republicans and one Democrat voting in favor, and all other Democrats voting against). In its current form, this measure would freeze local property taxes for three years, limiting municipal levy increases to the full amount of new construction. The bill

would also freeze the levy for schools for the next three years and was amended to require the Joint Committee on Finance to “appropriate school aids and revenue limits necessary to guarantee that school property taxes are frozen at their 2004 level.”

(continued on page 6)



WJC MONITORING STATE BUDGET

The Wisconsin Jewish Conference is closely monitoring many items in the Governor’s proposed 2005-2007 state budget.

Once again, the state faces a large deficit, projected at \$1.6 billion for the biennium. But, it is not nearly as big as last time, which was projected at \$3.2 billion when the process began. However, many difficult decisions will have to be made, and the budget will undergo many significant changes as it goes through the legislative process and then faces the Governor’s veto pen.

The following list includes just a few of the specific proposals in the Governor’s budget that may be of interest to WJC members.

Medical Assistance, BadgerCare and SeniorCare: The Governor’s proposal increases eligibility for all three of these critical public health care programs without changing eligibility requirements, cutting services or in-

creasing recipient cost-sharing. In several other states that are facing difficult budgets, moves have been made to tighten eligibility, cut back on optional benefits and/or shifting costs to recipients.

Long Term Care: The Governor proposes an ambitious plan to move people receiving long-term care services in institutions into the community. The “community relocations” proposal would move 1440 additional nursing home residents to the community over the biennium as part of the Community Integration Program (CIP-II). The Governor also set forth a goal of reducing nursing home utilization by 25% over the next eight years. The “money follows the person” from the nursing home to provide community-based services and remains in community to serve someone else after the original person placed no longer participates in the program or dies.

(continued on page 6)

PROPOSAL WOULD FORCE REFERENDUM ON DEATH PENALTY

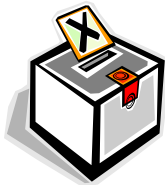
Proponents of the death penalty are attempting a new legislative strategy this session. Rather than introducing a bill to establish a death penalty in Wisconsin, which has repeatedly failed in the past, they are introducing a bill to require a statewide advisory referendum calling for the death penalty in certain

cases. Senate President, Allan Lasee (R-De Pere) has introduced Senate Joint Resolution 5, which calls for the referendum endorsing the death penalty in cases involving a person who is convicted of multiple of 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.

VOTER ID BILL CLEARS ASSEMBLY

A bill requiring voters show a photo ID in order to vote received a major boost when it passed the Assembly by a vote of 64-33.



Under the proposal, the state would offer free IDs to those who don't have them or can't afford them.

Four Democrats joined Republicans in support of the bill. Although the vote in favor of the bill was slightly larger than last session, it is still two votes shy of the 66 needed to override a veto.

(continued on page 5)

DIVESTMENT EFFORT CONCERNS JEWISH COMMUNITY

A well organized campaign demanding that universities divest assets in certain companies doing business in Israel has come to Wisconsin. Organized in this state by two Palestinian students at UW-Madison, the effort has placed divestment initiatives before the faculties of the UW System campuses at Platteville and Whitewater.

The resolution calls for the UW System's board of regents to divest from Caterpillar, General Dynamics, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, Northrop-Grumman and Raytheon based on evidence of the active role these companies play in enabling Israeli forces to engage in practices that violate international law and the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The Whitewater resolution went down to defeat by a wide margin in February on a voice vote. But, in late January it did pass the faculty senate at Platteville. The tie vote was broken by the senate president. This could make UW-Platteville the first university in the country to support an Israel divestment initiative.

(continued on page 5)

(continued on page 5)

Reproductive Rights

(continued from page 2)

may disseminate and requires audits.

The second bill, SB 97, changes Wisconsin's parental consent law for minors seeking abortions. It eliminates the authority of an adult family member, a foster parent, a treatment foster parent, or a parent who does not have legal custody of a minor to consent to an abortion for the minor and changes several aspects of the

judicial waiver of the parental consent

Voter ID

(continued from page 4)

Governor Doyle has indicated his intention to veto it. The legislation now moves on to the Senate but a vote is not expected to occur until April after the Senate Committee on Election Process Reform has held public hearings in five locations around the state.

WISCONSIN DELEGATION TAKES PART IN JCPA PLENUM IN WASHINGTON

In early March, over a dozen members of Wisconsin's Jewish community, including WJC Executive Director, Michael Blumenfeld, took part in the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' annual plenum in Washington, D.C. The JCPA is the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community and serves as the national coordinating and advisory body for national and local agencies in the field of Jewish community relations.

The Wisconsin delegation met directly with Senator Russ Feingold and with the staffs of Senator Herb Kohl and Representatives Gwen Moore and Tammy Baldwin. They discussed a wide range of issues of importance to the Jewish community, including the Federal Budget (particularly its effect on Medicaid), the crisis in the Sudan, and Israel-related issues (including support for the proposed \$350 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority).

In addition to visiting legislators, the Wisconsin delegation attended a variety of plenum sessions. For more information on the plenum

an JCPA in general, you can visit their web site at <http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org/>

Israel Divestment

(continued from page 4)

Although the Platteville faculty's action is troubling, it is unlikely to have any practical effect. The resolution is advisory to the Board of Regents, and the Board appears uninterested in taking up any form of Israel divestment plan.





Chair: Joel Pittelman
Co-Chair: Mark Laufman

Past Chairs:
Doris Chortek
Daniel Chudnow
Adrian Cohen
Robert Friebert
James Fromstein
Mark Laufman
Tom Schneider

Executive Director: Michael Blumenfeld

Member Communities:

Antigo
Appleton
Beloit
Green Bay
Janesville
Kenosha
Madison
Manitowoc
Marshfield
Milwaukee
Oshkosh
Racine
Sheboygan
Stevens Point
Waukesha
Wausau

16 North Carroll Street, Suite 800
Madison, WI 53703

Phone: 608-257-1888
Fax: 608-257-2172

Email: mblumenfeld@mblumenfeld.com

Property Tax Freeze Passes Legislature

(continued from page 3)

At the time this Update was prepared, Governor Doyle said he would veto AB 58. A key concern about the difference between the freeze proposed in AB 58 and the Governor's budget bill relates to the effect of a freeze on the amount of funding available for schools over the next several years. Doyle's office had released a document showing the difference in funding for all school districts under AB 58 versus his budget proposal. This document is available at www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=2543&locid=19.

The Assembly does not appear to have the two-thirds majority vote that would be needed to override a veto. Because a property tax freeze is also part of the budget proposal, this debate will likely continue over the next several months even if the Governor vetoes AB 58.

Budget Issues

(continued from page 3)

School Finance: The Governor's proposal includes restoring the state's commitment to funding two-thirds of local school costs, eliminates the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO), increases funding to offset the increasing costs to operate the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program which lowers class sizes, and provides start-up funding as an incentive for districts to implement four-year-old kindergarten.

W-2: The Governor proposes a 10 percent cut in administration and a 21 percent cut in benefits to reflect decreasing numbers of participants receiving cash benefits. The proposal also provides eligibility for benefits without work or a work search until an infant is 6 months old, instead of the current 12 weeks, and a monthly cash benefit to pregnant women, with no other children, who are in the third trimester of pregnancy and are not able to work because of a medically verified, at risk pregnancy.

Elderly and Disabled Transportation: The Governor recommends an increase of \$6 million for the elderly and disabled transportation ("85.21") program. This represents a very significant increase for this meagerly funded program.

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