



# Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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To the Honorable Members of the Senate:

I have approved Senate Bill 45 as 2025 Wisconsin Act 15 and deposited it in the Office of the Secretary of State.

Over the past three biennial budgets, I have made it a priority to listen to the will of the people, to do the right thing for Wisconsin, and to create prosperity that will define our state for generations. We've worked hard to be prudent with taxpayer dollars and save where we can, while still investing in the needs that had long been neglected, cutting taxes for working families, and staying within our state's means. As a result, over the last several biennia, I've been proud to use my signing pen—and my broad, constitutional veto authority—to secure historic investments in our kids and schools, families, and communities across our state.

During my time in office, together, we've secured generational increases to shared revenue for local communities, made historic progress in our work to fully fund our public schools, provided some of the largest state increases in state history in critical infrastructure investments, including investing over half a billion dollars to build housing for our workforce, expanding access to affordable high-speed internet to help 410,000 homes and businesses get connected to new or improved service, and improving more than 8,600 miles of our darn roads and 2,000 bridges statewide. In fact,

Wisconsinites could drive from Wausau, Wisconsin, to Disney World in Orlando, Florida—and back—three times over—on the number of miles of roads we have fixed. We have made critical investments in our farmers, producers, and their families, including supporting our meat and dairy producers, investing in farmer mental health resources, and bolstering Wisconsin's exports worldwide to ensure our \$116 billion agricultural industry remains on top and that we continue to retain the title of “America's Dairyland” for generations to come.

We have made investments in key priorities, delivering for kids, families, schools, veterans, seniors, communities, and so many more, and we have been able to do so all while cutting taxes for hard-working Wisconsinites. Through our bipartisan work to cut taxes over the past six years, Wisconsinites are keeping more of their hard-earned income today than at any point in the last 50 years. When I first took office in 2019, the state had the 24th-highest tax burden in the nation. Now, a recent Wisconsin Policy Forum report shows Wisconsin's state and local tax burden has dropped to a record low in 2024, and today, the state and local taxes Wisconsinites pay as a share of their income is the lowest it has been in over half a century.

We have invested in state needs and priorities that have long been neglected while still delivering real, meaningful tax relief to Wisconsinites who needed it—and we did so all while staying well within the state's means. Since 2019, we have:

- Had a positive General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) ending balance for all five full fiscal years that I have been Governor after the state previously ran a GAAP deficit for 30 consecutive years;

- Increased our Budget Stabilization Fund (also known as the “rainy-day” fund) to record-high levels, six times more than when I took office to a figure that will exceed \$2 billion later this year;
- Achieved our state’s first underlying AAA bond rating on our General Obligation bonds since the early 1980s, which we have maintained since 2021;
- Reduced our state’s overall outstanding debt by \$2.5 billion, or nearly 20 percent, over the past six years; and
- Completed numerous debt refinancing transactions providing present value debt service savings of nearly \$600 million.

Each budget I have introduced and signed as Governor has balanced the important obligations of both finding ways to save where we could while still upholding our duty to protect the future Wisconsinites deserve that we are working in earnest to build, together. The budget I am signing with improvements today is the rule, not an exception.

Thanks to our bipartisan work and strategic investments over the last six years, we began this 2025-27 budget process with a robust opening balance, reduced debt, and steady economic growth. And much like every budget I have ever built, the 2025-27 Executive Budget began as every budget always has for me, by doing what is best for our kids.

I have always believed that what's best for our kids is what's best for our state—our kids are why I became an educator, a principal, and a superintendent, they are why I

ran to serve as State Superintendent of Public Instruction for a decade, and they are why I ran for Governor. I wanted to do more and do better for our kids.

I began 2025 by declaring it the Year of the Kid in Wisconsin, and I introduced the most pro-kid budget of any Governor and of any budget in our state's history. If we want to improve our kids' outcomes and make sure our kids can be successful both within and beyond our schools, we must shorten the odds. I made it clear from the get-go that my top priority would be to pass a pro-kid budget that makes meaningful investments in Wisconsin's kids at every stage and every age, from early childhood to K-12 to our higher education institutions. While the final budget being sent to my desk today is far from the budget I introduced and fought for, after months of negotiations with Republican leaders, I am proud to have reached a bipartisan budget agreement that delivers on that important promise.

Republican lawmakers had long indicated this budget would not invest in child care providers. Today, I am proud to be signing into law a budget that invests over \$361 million in our child care industry, including a third of which will provide direct support to child care providers, much like the wildly successful Child Care Counts Program, to help providers find staff, cut wait lists, and lower the cost of child care for working families. This investment also includes a new first-of-its-kind "Get Kids Ready" initiative to help get kids ready for the classroom and get an earlier jump start on learning. This is the first-ever child care program funded solely through general purpose revenue (GPR) in state history, helping to ensure that future budgets will include an ongoing and continued state commitment to our child care providers statewide.

Republican lawmakers had also long indicated this budget would provide no new increases for our K-12 schools. Today, I am proud to be signing into law a budget that provides nearly \$1.4 billion in spendable revenue for K-12 schools, including the largest increase in the special education reimbursement rate for K-12 schools ever in state history with more-than-half-a-billion-dollar investment. This will bring the special education reimbursement rate to 42 percent in the first year of the biennium and 45 percent in the second year of the biennium –the highest rate schools have seen in 30 years and a larger increase for special education than the last three state budgets *combined*. Additionally, we know our kids are struggling with their mental health perhaps now more than ever, which is why I fought hard for the second consecutive biennial budget to ensure our state budget invests in comprehensive, school-based mental health services for our kids. While I am disappointed the Legislature declined to make sure this investment is an ongoing and sustainable state obligation, the \$30 million I fought to secure in this budget will ensure our kids will continue to be able to access mental health services and support at school modeled on my successful “Get Kids Ahead” initiative I created several years ago. All told, through our bipartisan budget agreement, this budget includes a net categorical aid increase for our K-12 schools that is five times larger than the increase provided in the most recent state biennial budget.

Finally, I have spent the last year advocating for increased investments in the UW System to prevent further campus closures, staff and faculty layoffs, and program cuts and consolidations, so Republican lawmakers' threats to cut nearly \$90 million from our UW System were a nonstarter for me. I am especially proud that the bipartisan budget I am signing today makes the largest increase in our UW System in nearly two

decades with an increase of over \$250 million for the UW System over the next two years. This includes over \$100 million to support UW System campuses statewide to help stabilize the system after recent campus closures, layoffs, and program cuts and consolidations and ensure UW institutions remain economic and workforce hubs in communities across our state.

We are also making critical investments in our UW System faculty and staff with a \$54 million investment to help retain and recruit faculty in high-demand fields and increasing wages for UW System workers with an almost \$90 million investment. We are also making critical investments in capital building projects on campuses across the state, including projects at UW-Madison, La Crosse, Oshkosh, Stout, Milwaukee, and Stevens Point, with an over \$1.2 billion investment. Together, these investments will help ensure our UW System institutions remain competitive, world-class institutions and continue to be the gem of our state.

Furthermore, a critical part of our work doing what's best for our kids in the Year of the Kid must be supporting the families and communities that raise them, too. As families and communities face devastating federal cuts to basic needs programs, including Medicaid and food security programs, as well as efforts to gut tax credits that will make household utility bills go up, our bipartisan budget works to lower everyday out-of-pocket energy costs, supports access to local, nutritious food for Wisconsin's kids, families, and seniors, and ensures Wisconsinites have access to quality, affordable healthcare.

Household budgets are already stretched too thin. So, I am proud this bipartisan budget includes my budget proposal to lower out-of-pocket costs on energy and utility bills for working families by eliminating the sales tax on household energy and utility bills. This will help reduce energy costs for families and save Wisconsin households over \$178 million over the next two years alone.

Through this bipartisan budget, 1.6 million Wisconsin income taxpayers will see income tax cuts with an average tax cut of \$180. All told, this budget brings the tax cuts I have enacted since taking office to over \$12.6 billion, including \$2.4 billion on an annual basis by the end of this biennium, helping Wisconsinites keep more of their hard-earned money in their household budgets. With these reductions and four consecutive state budgets signed that included significant middle-class income tax cuts, most middle-class individual income taxpayers will have seen total reductions of 20 percent or more under the budgets I have been proud to sign into law.

Additionally, this budget also works to ensure Wisconsinites have access to quality, affordable healthcare statewide, especially in our rural communities with new efforts to bolster health systems across the state. Currently, hospitals in Wisconsin pay an assessment of approximately 1.8 percent of their net patient revenue to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). The department uses a portion of these funds to make supplemental Medicaid payments back to hospitals and transfers a portion of the funding to the Medical Assistance Trust Fund. This budget requires DHS to establish the hospital assessment at six percent, with 30 percent of the funds generated retained by the state in the Medical Assistance Trust Fund, which helps to fund the state Medicaid program. The remainder of the funds will be used for

investments in hospital provider payments, resulting in over \$1.1 billion in investments in Wisconsin hospitals. This will help prevent hospital closures and ensure access to healthcare in communities across the state.

Through our bipartisan budget negotiations, I am also glad the state will fund the current Medicaid program, providing full funding for the minimum fee schedule implemented by DHS last biennium to help long-term care facilities avoid staffing cuts and facility closures, as well as provide an increased investment in free and charitable clinics. These critical investments in the state's healthcare systems come at a time of significant uncertainty caused by the federal government and Congressional efforts to potentially jeopardize healthcare access for millions of Americans and will help safeguard access to quality, affordable healthcare for families and communities across the state.

As the federal government and U.S. Congress appear poised as of this writing to make devastating cuts to basic food security programs across the nation, I fought hard to secure \$10 million to continue the popular Food Security Initiative grant program, which connects local nonprofit food assistance programs, such as food pantries, with local food producers. This not only ensures families have access to healthy, local foods, but supports our farmers and producers by getting their products on shelves. In addition, as we have in each of my previous biennial budgets, we are continuing our work to improve Wisconsin's roads, bridges, and local infrastructure. This includes \$150 million in continuing support for the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program, created and funded in the 2023-25 biennium, to repair and improve Wisconsin's rural roads, most especially to help farmers and producers and the state's agricultural and



forestry industries move products to market safely and efficiently. As a portion of this investment we were able to secure, \$30 million will specifically target bridge and culvert repair to help improve and repair deteriorating bridges across the state. All told, this bipartisan budget will also generate nearly \$200 million in additional revenue to improve the sustainability of the transportation fund and invest \$14 million in local communities through municipal service payments to meet basic and unique local needs alike.

Finally, another critical part of our work to do what's best for our kids includes making sure every kid and family has safe, clean drinking water. Every Wisconsinite should be able to trust the water straight from their tap, and in order for our kids to bring their best and full selves to the classroom and prepare for their futures, kids and families must have access to clean, safe drinking water that is free of harmful contaminants like PFAS and lead. Therefore, I'm glad to be signing a bipartisan budget today that increases borrowing for the state's Environmental Improvement Fund by \$731.6 million to secure federal clean water and safe drinking water capitalization grants over the next four years. This will help meet the demand from local communities who need support to upgrade local water systems and infrastructure to ensure every Wisconsin kid, family, and community has clean, safe drinking water.

Through this bipartisan budget, we are making progress key state priorities to move Wisconsin forward: making critical investments supporting our kids and schools, lowering costs of child care and household bills for working families, stabilizing our child care industry, cutting taxes for seniors and middle-class families, ensuring Wisconsinites have access to healthcare, continuing to fix our roads and bridges, and

significant investments in our local communities, among much more. Simply put: this is a pro-kid budget that is a win for Wisconsin's kids, families, and communities, and our state's future in 2025 the Year of the Kid, and I am incredibly proud of this important work.

At the same time, this budget is also a reflection of bipartisan compromise—that means everyone gets something they want and no one gets everything they want. I spent months working together with Republican leaders to reach common ground and find consensus. Today, I am signing a bipartisan budget compromise that reflects those months of conversations and is supported by a majority of the Legislature with bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats alike.

While this budget looks drastically different than the budget I proposed and does not include everything I asked for and hoped it would, frankly, I believe most Wisconsinites would say that compromise is a good thing because that is how government is supposed to work.

Wisconsin is a purple state. At the end of the day, it is my job as Governor to get things done, and it is my job to be a Governor for the whole state. I made a promise to always work to do the right thing for Wisconsin. And I believe working together to find common ground so we can pass a bipartisan budget that reflects the will of the people of this state is part of keeping that promise.

As I noted two years ago, I recognize there are those who would urge me to veto this entire budget and tell the Legislature to go back to the drawing board to start this

whole darn budget over. Doing so, however, would have created a level of uncertainty across this state for months that would not have made the lives of the people of this state any better. It would have failed to secure more than \$1 billion we will now be able to invest in healthcare across our state. It would have meant not providing by far the largest nominal biennial increase in funding for kids with disabilities in state history. It would have meant not fulfilling our responsibility to kids and working families across Wisconsin who count on roughly 4,600 child care providers to keep their doors open, ensuring the employment of over 72,000 child care professionals who care for over 175,000 kids. It would have meant not honoring our commitment to the hundreds of thousands of students to do everything we can to provide them with a quality higher education at the many great institutions across our state and providing them with the largest increase in financial aid in many years. It would have meant not providing additional support to our farmers, care providers, veterans, seniors, workers, and educators, and it would have meant leaving the people across our state wondering why government at every level is dysfunctional and what would happen next even as the state maintains a \$4.3 billion budget surplus. Failing to reach consensus and vetoing this budget in its entirety was an untenable option, not just for me, but for the people of our state.

Nevertheless, passing the state budget is never the end of our work; there is, as always, more work to do, and I am optimistic we can continue our bipartisan work toward accomplishing shared priorities that we know Wisconsinites want and deserve. Chief among them is reauthorizing the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program that, for decades, has been our promise to future generations of Wisconsinites to help preserve our proud conservation heritage and protect our

natural resources so that our kids and grandkids will have the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy them just like so many of us have.

Additionally, we must get back to the table to ensure the Legislature finally releases more than \$125 million in funding to combat PFAS contamination for communities across our state that was approved now two years ago in the last state budget. We must find ways to work together to lower everyday, out-of-pocket costs for working families, including preventing medical price gouging and surprise billing, holding insurance companies accountable, lowering prescription drug prices, and improving oversight over drug companies. And we need to have serious conversations about how we're going to keep Wisconsin's kids, families, schools, and communities safe by reducing crime and preventing gun violence.

Whether expanding high-speed internet and closing the digital divide, improving healthcare access and expanding BadgerCare, building more affordable workforce housing and bolstering our current and future workforce to make sure we have the 21st-century workforce needed to support a 21st-century economy, these items, and many more, are not controversial. They are not extreme or far-fetched, at least not to Wisconsinites who spend more of their time outside of the Capitol building than inside of it.

My promise to the people of Wisconsin has always been to be a Governor who works for all Wisconsinites, who does the right thing when it matters most. That is a promise I will continue to keep. I am signing this budget today because it is the right thing to

do for our state knowing there is much work ahead as we continue building the future our kids and grandkids deserve.

We have so much more work to do and so much we can accomplish if we're willing to work together—this bipartisan budget proves it. So, let's continue our work in earnest and let's give these priorities the deliberation and debate worthy of the traditions and the people of our great state.

The following is an abbreviated summary of the items in this budget, including my vetoes:

## **DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR KIDS**

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Building upon our historic increase in spendable authority for public school districts in the 2023-25 biennium, this budget sets a new high-water mark by providing an overall increase of nearly \$1.4 billion in spendable authority for public school districts. This figure exceeds the \$1.2 billion increase in spendable authority for public school districts in the 2023-25 biennium and is again more than ten times larger than what the increase in spendable authority was for public school districts in the 2021-23 biennium. I declared 2025 the Year of the Kid, and this budget is proof of what we can accomplish when prioritize our kids and schools.

While I would like to have seen an even greater investment in our kids just as I initially proposed, this budget represents significant progress in providing additional resources to our schools. Nevertheless, we must continue to work to prioritize school funding now and into the future; I did that by exercising my partial veto authority in the 2023-25 biennium to ensure new spendable authority for public school districts would be predictable and substantial. This budget focuses on helping schools support kids receiving special education services and mitigate budget pressures caused by increasing special education costs and continues to make meaningful progress toward our goal of reimbursing 60 percent of special education costs by bringing the special education reimbursement rate to the highest rate in 30 years.

- This historic investment continues to be driven by the \$325 per pupil increase in revenue limit authority in each fiscal year, that I ensured through my partial veto of 2023 Wisconsin Act 19. This budget continues the largest increase over a four-year period, or a single Governor's term, in statewide revenue limit authority since revenue limits were first imposed on K-12 schools in 1993-94 and continues to be both permanent and base-building. School districts will have continued budget certainty similar to what they experienced before the statutory indexing mechanism for the revenue limit adjustments was deleted over fifteen years ago.
- Every kid has the right to a quality education, regardless of their ability, yet Wisconsin, like many other states across the nation, has faced a special education staffing and funding crisis. This budget provides an unprecedented half-a-billion-dollar investment in special education reimbursement with \$207.6 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$297.0 million in fiscal year 2026-27 to achieve special

education reimbursement rates of 42 percent and 45 percent, respectively. These rates will be the highest reimbursement rates for kids with disabilities our state has seen in 30 years. This represents both the two largest single year increases over prior year funding for special education aid, and the first time since the state started reimbursing special education costs in 1981 that the reimbursement rate has increased by more the five percent in a single year.

- This budget invests \$54.6 million GPR over the biennium for high-cost special education aid, increasing the reimbursement rate of this program from its current estimated 25.9 percent to 50 percent in fiscal year 2025-26 and 90 percent in fiscal year 2026-27. This categorical aid helps school districts pay a portion of their eligible special education costs for pupils with specific and elevated educational needs. Now children with disabilities with the greatest needs can have a portion of their costs exceeding \$30,000 be reimbursed at the same rate as the highest cost students attending a private school under the Special Needs Scholarship Program.
- According to the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health's annual report, kids across our state are reporting increased levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts at concerning rates, especially girls, kids of color, and LGBTQ youth. It is clear our kids are struggling perhaps now more than ever. The simple truth is that our kids can only achieve their full and best potential when they can bring their full and best selves to the classroom. To address the mental health crisis facing our kids, this budget again provides \$30 million GPR over the biennium to continue funding for school-based mental health modeled on my “Get Kids Ahead” initiative.

- The budget provides \$37.1 million GPR in 2025-26 to provide grants to reimburse school districts, independent charter schools and private choice schools to adopt an approved literacy curriculum and to reimburse school districts and independent charter schools for the cost of professional development training in literacy. Additionally, the budget exempts this increase from being included in the calculation of indexing of payments for private choice schools and independent charter schools, preventing them from benefiting twice from funding school districts could only receive once.
- The budget provides additional investments in the following areas:
  - \$300,000 GPR annually for the Holocaust Education Resource Center to support increased programming to educate students on the dangers of hatred, antisemitism, and genocide.
  - \$1,450,000 GPR annually for diagnostic assessment of early literacy skills to help make the literacy reforms of 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 a reality in our schools.
  - \$250,000 GPR annually to support the professional development of science teachers to help ensure high-quality science education for students.
  - \$2 million GPR over the biennium to fully fund the state's sparsity aid program for eligible districts in both fiscal year 2025-26 and fiscal year 2026-27.



- \$36 million SEG over the biennium for school library aids to reflect the historic distributions provided in recent years.

## DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Economic Support

- The cost of child care is too darn high in Wisconsin. And even if parents can afford and find care, they may be put on wait lists for months. The Child Care Counts Program, funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act, was critical to helping providers keep their doors open, lights on, and staff paid to ensure parents had high quality care for their kids over the last several years, but as that funding comes to an end, I made it a top priority in this budget to invest in the state's child care industry to help fill available child care slots, cut child care wait lists, and lower the cost of care for working families. This budget invests a total of more than \$361 million to provide critical support for the child care industry in several ways. First, a third of this investment includes providing \$110 million FED in fiscal year 2025-26 for bridge payments to child care providers as the Child Care Counts program winds down.
- This budget also increases affordability for more Wisconsin families by raising rates in the Wisconsin Shares child care program to meet the statutorily required 75th percentile of market rates, by providing \$123.2 million TANF over the biennium. This will help lower out-of-pocket costs for working families across the state.

- To ensure child care is more affordable for the state's most needy families, over \$4.2 million TANF over the biennium has been provided to continue a copayment waiver for families with incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Support child care providers serving four-year-olds to help prepare Wisconsin's kids for the classroom and get an earlier jumpstart on learning at a critical time in development by providing \$66 million GPR over the biennium, including administrative funds for the Department of Children and Families, for a new school readiness initiative called "Get Kids Ready," the first-ever child care program funded solely by GPR in Wisconsin state history.
- Because it is more costly for providers to provide care for infant and toddlers than other age groups due to smaller ratios of child care workers to children, create a two-year pilot program and provide a combination of up to \$28.5 million TANF and interest earnings over the biennium to enhance payments for infants and toddlers served under the Shares program. The enhanced payments would be \$200 per month for children under the age of 18 months and \$100 per month for children between 18 and 30 months. This program will help expand capacity across the state and ensure more families with infants and toddlers can access quality, affordable child care.
- Align Wisconsin more closely with peer states like Minnesota by creating a temporary, two-year pilot program enabling child care providers to accommodate more infants and toddlers.

- Expand access to child care for working families by allowing for “large family care centers” to serve up to 12 kids and standardize the age for assistant child care teachers to 16 years while retaining all programmatic requirements for assistant teachers.
- Increase funding by \$2 million all funds over the biennium to expand access to high quality child care in the state, including launching an online software platform that is linked to the department’s website to connect child care providers with child care workers.
- In order to address critical child care needs in the Southwestern area of the state, provide \$2 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to support a matching grant for the purchase, construction or renovation of a child care facility in the City of Platteville.
- Increase funding by \$2 million GPR over the biennium to bolster Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), which help parents find child care locally and provide training and technical assistance opportunities to child care providers.
- Provides \$2,562,000 TANF in fiscal year 2025-26 for IT costs related to providing 12-month Wisconsin Shares authorizations to bring the state into compliance with a federal regulation that requires a minimum of 12 months of eligibility between initial eligibility determination and redetermination.

- Increases funding to the Boys and Girls Clubs by \$5 million TANF in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$500,000 TANF in fiscal year 2026-27 to improve the literacy skills and math proficiency for low-income students.
- Provides \$1 million TANF over the biennium to expand Jobs for America's Graduates-Wisconsin program to provide educational support and job or postsecondary readiness for TANF-eligible youth.
- Ensure assistance is available for needy families in case of fire, flood, natural disaster, energy crisis, homelessness or impending homelessness by providing over \$4 million TANF in each fiscal year for the Emergency Assistance program.
- Provides more than \$11.8 million all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and more than \$20.9 million all funds in fiscal year 2026-27 to support the continuation of the Child Support Modernization IT project to implement an improved system for Wisconsin to continue meeting federal performance standards and evolve with the changing child support landscape.

#### Child Welfare

- Reestimates the cost of Milwaukee Child Protective Services by providing \$5,286,400 all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$4,269,600 all funds in fiscal year 2026-27, which includes reestimates of caseload related services.

- Increase funding for the Tribal high-cost out-of-home care placement program by \$1,000,000 PR Tribal gaming revenues annually to better support Native American children in the child welfare system.
- Provides \$824,100 all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$1,657,300 all funds to increase foster care and kinship care aid payments by 2.5 percent, effective January 1, 2026, ensuring foster parents caring for children in out-of-home care receive sufficient support.
- Provides one-time funding of more than \$3 million FED over the biennium to continue funding online, evidence-based parenting programming.

## **BUILDING A 21ST-CENTURY ECONOMY & WORKFORCE**

### TAXES

This is the fourth consecutive biennial budget where we have cut income tax rates in our state, which have primarily benefitted middle-class Wisconsinites. Thanks to our efforts over the past six years to cut taxes, Wisconsinites are keeping more of their hard-earned income today than at any point in the last 50 years. Since becoming Governor, I have signed into law tax cuts that will provide a cumulative total of over \$12.6 billion in state tax relief by the end of fiscal year 2026-27, the overwhelming majority of which, \$11.6 billion, have been income tax cuts. Specifically, we have enacted individual income tax reductions that will deliver ongoing relief of \$2.2 billion annually. In 2019, when I took office, Wisconsin had the 24th highest tax burden in

the nation. In 2024, that dropped to a record low. Today, Wisconsin is ranked 35th in the nation, and the state and local taxes Wisconsin residents pay as a share of their income is the lowest it has been in over half a century. This budget continues to build upon that trend going forward with total tax reductions of over \$1.5 billion in the 2025-27 biennial budget.

- The multiple tax cuts included in this budget will reduce Wisconsin individual income tax burdens by over \$600 million annually. First, the budget expands the second individual income tax bracket to tax more income under the 4.4 percent rate instead of at the 5.3 percent rate. Second, the budget creates a new retirement income exclusion for the first \$24,000 in retirement income for each filer age 67 or older, or up to \$48,000 for a married couple. Taken together, these provisions will reduce individual income taxes by approximately \$1.3 billion over the biennium.
- For the fourth consecutive budget, there will be a middle-class income tax cut with the benefits overwhelmingly going to middle income Wisconsin residents as 82 percent of the tax cut will go to those with adjusted gross income below \$200,000 under the expansion of the second bracket.
- Those with incomes of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will see individual income tax burdens decline by approximately 6-7 percent.
- Roughly 1.6 million Wisconsin income taxpayers will see income tax cuts under the provision with an average tax cut of \$180.

- With this income tax cut, most middle-class individual income taxpayers will now realize total reductions of 20 percent since 2019.
- The result of these changes, beyond providing for a lower tax burden for hardworking Wisconsinites, has been to make the Wisconsin individual income tax a more progressive system that provides relief to those who need it and not those who don't.
- Through the retirement income exclusion, those age 67 or older to exclude up to \$24,000 (up to \$48,000 for married-joint filers) of retirement income payments will reduce taxes for approximately 280,000 Wisconsin filers by an average of about \$1,000 per filer, making Wisconsin a more attractive state in which to retire.
- As I proposed, this budget also eliminates the sales tax on electricity and natural gas sold for residential consumption during the months of May through October, building on the current November through April exemption. This change is estimated to save Wisconsin taxpayers over \$178 million over the next two years, with \$55.2 million in savings in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$123.5 million in savings in fiscal year 2026-27. With the rising costs of electricity nationally, this provides needed relief to Wisconsin families and lowers household energy bills.
- Additionally, the budget reestablishes Wisconsin's film production tax credit with an annual award cap of \$5 million to help bring creative endeavors to Wisconsin's doorstep and put our state on a national stage.

## DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- The budget provides \$1,899,400 GPR and \$7,018,000 FED annually for vocational rehabilitation resources to help individuals with disabilities find a job, keep a job, or upskill for advancement.
- To invest in the next generation of Wisconsin workers, the budget provides \$2,536,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$3,466,000 in fiscal year 2026-27 for the youth apprenticeship program, which gives high school juniors and seniors an opportunity for career exploration and skills development.

## WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

- Our Wisconsin Technical College System is essential to the future of our economy and workforce, providing a quality and affordable education to Wisconsin residents in high-demand fields. This budget increases general aid to the system by providing \$8.3 million GPR over the biennium to bolster the institutions' efforts to train the workers of the future.
- Allowing greater and more affordable access to educational materials ensures our students will have the resources they need to learn without breaking the bank. Our state will continue investing in open educational resources and course materials by providing \$3 million GPR over the biennium for grants to technical colleges to improve and create such content.



- Artificial intelligence has the potential to reshape Wisconsin's economy and workforce and provide the opportunity for Wisconsin to become a leader in artificial intelligence innovation. In order for Wisconsin to compete not only nationally, but globally, we need our workers be ready for the future of artificial intelligence. This budget provides \$2 million GPR over the biennium to provide grants to technical college district boards to support the adoption and use of artificial intelligence.

#### UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

The University of Wisconsin (UW) System is crucial in attracting, training, and retaining the next generation of workers in our state. It is a hub of innovation, creation, research, and economic vitality in communities across our state and is absolutely vital to addressing generational workforce shortages that are holding our state back. I have spent the last year advocating for increased investments in the UW System, and I am proud that in the face of threats of nearly \$90 million in cuts, we secured over \$250 million GPR over the biennium for the UW System. This is the largest increase for the UW System in nearly twenty years, ensuring that higher education institutions can remain competitive while delivering an affordable education for our students, including:

- Increasing the UW System's general program operations by over \$100 million GPR over the biennium. This provision allocates a portion of the funds to institutions based upon declining student enrollment over the past ten years as well as institutions in proportion to the aggregate number of course credits awarded to enrolled undergraduates.

- Providing \$7 million GPR over the biennium to expand virtual mental health services to institutions with enrollments of up to 30,000 full-time undergraduate students enrolled.
- Providing \$1 million FED to the UW-Green Bay's Rising Phoenix Early College High School Program to provide students with dual-enrollment opportunities for earning college credits.
- Providing \$54 million GPR over the biennium in market and merit-based compensation for attracting faculty in high demand fields of study.
- Providing nearly \$90 million to increase wages for workers across the UW System, including faculty and staff.
- Increasing flexibility and affordability by ensuring that general educational credit hours earned are transferable across all University of Wisconsin campuses by Fall of 2026.

This budget also makes a historic investment in building projects across the UW System. Nearly \$1.2 billion is invested from all funding sources on projects to increase the system's competitive edge and modernize facilities:

- Over \$137 million to demolish UW-Oshkosh's library facility that is more than 60 years old, renovate an addition that is more than 50 years old, and add a new

addition at Polk Learning Commons to promote recruitment and retention for current and future students.

- Over \$194 million to complete construction of the Prairie Springs Science Center at UW-LaCrosse and demolish Crowley Hall, which lacks fire suppression, has failing mechanical systems, and no longer meets modern science and research needs. This expansion will support STEM education and workforce development by providing state-of-the-art instructional labs and research spaces.
- Over \$189 million to renovate the Health Sciences and Northwest Quadrant complex at UW-Milwaukee to transform former hospital buildings into a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary Health Sciences hub. This project unifies programs currently scattered across five buildings, expands instructional labs, and enhances collaborative learning in high-demand fields in the health care sector.
- Over \$10 million to renovate and build a new addition to DeJope Residence Hall at UW-Madison to address increased freshmen enrollment and an increase in on-campus student living by creating additional capacity for housing and dining across campus.
- Over \$98 million to renovate and build a new addition to Sentry Hall at UW-Stevens Point to create a new student-forward space for the Sentry School of Business and Economics Centers.

- \$800,000 for planning for needed renovations at Sanburg Hall East Tower at UW-Milwaukee.
- Nearly \$32 million to renovate and build a new addition at UW-Stout Recreation Complex, which houses physical education, intercollegiate athletics, and campus recreational facilities. The original building was constructed in 1964 with the natatorium permanently closed in 2018. The decommissioned natatorium will be converted into a multi-purpose gymnasium, increasing capacity.
- Nearly \$19 million to renovate and expand the Chadbourne Residence Dining Hall at UW-Madison, providing additional seating and serving capabilities as well as modernizing mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and technology systems.
- Nearly \$7 million in planning funding to replace the engineering buildings at UW-Milwaukee.
- Nearly \$7 million in planning funding to expand and renovate Ottensman Hall at UW-Platteville.
- \$5 million in planning funding for relocation and demolition of the Humanities Building at UW-Madison which suffers from severe structural and environmental deficiencies.
- Over \$160 million for UW-Madison's Science Hall, which was originally built in 1887 and will undergo a renovation to restore the buildings historic character

while improving accessibility, addressing deferred maintenance issues, and adding an atrium.

#### HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD

- Students and parents continue to face concerns over the rising costs of higher education, especially lower-income and underserved populations. This budget will continue my commitment to address college affordability by providing \$19.6 million GPR for Wisconsin Grants over the biennium, increasing need-based financial assistance for students who need it the most.
- According to a May 2025 report by the La Follette School of Public Affairs, 78 percent of emergency medical services agencies provided mutual aid to another agency due to inadequate staffing. This budget will improve the ability of individuals to overcome financial barriers to becoming emergency medical technicians or paramedics by providing \$3.5 million GPR in fiscal year 2026-27 for emergency medical services training cost reimbursements for materials and training at a technical college.

#### DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- To boost the state's firefighter pipeline, the budget provides \$75,000 PR annually to the Department of Safety and Professional Services to increase the number of youth training to become volunteer firefighters.

- In order to maintain customer service levels and ensure timely processing of credential applications, the budget:
  - Extends 5.0 FTE PR customer service positions at the Department of Safety and Professional Services over three years to continue assisting individuals with licensing and credentialing applications processes.
  - Provides \$811,800 PR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$820,700 PR in fiscal year 2026-27 for information technology upgrades to credential processing systems.
- The budget will improve public safety, as well as the efficiency and content of pharmacy inspections conducted by the Department of Safety and Professional Services, by providing 1.0 FTE PR pharmacy practicing consultant position and associated funding.

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

- Invests an additional \$400,000 GPR in each year to increase the available funding for the Dairy Processor Grant program. Increasing our state's dairy processing capacity is critical for farmers to ensure their high-quality milk can be processed into numerous products like cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and more. This program provides grants up to \$50,000 to help foster innovation, improve profitability, and sustain the long-term viability of Wisconsin's dairy processing facilities.
- Bolsters the Meat Processor Grant program with an additional \$500,000 GPR in each year. This program strives to grow Wisconsin's meat industry and improve the

long-term viability of the livestock sector through services to meat processing facilities. Meat Processor Grants are available to new or existing processors to facilitate changes and expansion to grow harvest capacity and/or increase product throughput. These facilities are crucial in producing various award-winning Wisconsin meat products like sausage and jerky.

- Allocates \$1,594,700 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$862,800 GPR in fiscal year 2026-27 to meet federal expenditure requirements for the meat inspection program. These inspections help ensure the meat products consumed by Wisconsinites are produced safely and match nutrition claims found on food labels.
- Provide \$100,000 GPR in each year for mental health assistance to farmers and farm families. Farming brings unique challenges including unpredictable weather, uncertain markets, and labor shortages, especially in the face of reckless trade wars and actions at the federal government and careless cuts to federal programs affecting farmers' bottom lines. Prolonged and increasing amounts of stress can negatively impact overall wellness, even leading to depression or anxiety. This crucial funding ensures farmers and farm family members can receive counseling services from a participating mental health provider at no cost.
- Invests \$10 million into the successful Food Security Initiative to help connect local food pantries with local food producers to keep food pantries across the state stocked at a time of record-high demand.

- Supports the continued efforts of Wisconsin’s farmers and agricultural industries through Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant program. Additional information on this program is available below.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The 2025-27 Biennial Budget includes needed financial resources directed to vital Department of Transportation programs that will support improvements in the state’s transportation infrastructure. Relative to base funding, this budget provides \$1.14 billion in new funding for key transportation investments, ensuring we can continue our important work improving roads, bridges, and infrastructure across Wisconsin. These investments include support for local roads across the state, funding for critical state highways, and properly funding highway maintenance. This budget:

- Invests \$580 million from the General Fund to supplement the Transportation Fund, reducing borrowing pressures and securing the fund’s long-term health.
- Improves ongoing Transportation Fund revenues with a \$50 increase in the motor vehicle title fee, a 10 percent increase in the registration fee schedule for trucks with a gross weight of over 6,000 pounds, and an \$8.50 increase in the fee for driver’s licenses. In addition to these fee modifications, the budget increases ongoing transfers to the Transportation Fund by approximately \$17 million and supports the fund with more GPR-backed bonding to reduce pressures on existing revenues. Taken together, these increases in new revenue will provide \$186 million over the biennium to the Transportation Fund.



- Provides a historic increase of nearly \$333 million SEG over the biennium in the state highway rehabilitation program to restore the program's purchasing power.
- Provides \$244.5 million SEG, of which \$204.5 million is funded with transportation revenue bonds and \$86.3 million FED for the major highway development program. This will keep key projects such as I-41 and I-39/90 on schedule.
- Enumerates the I-39/90/94 reconstruction project from Madison to Wisconsin Dells as a major highway development project.
- Authorizes \$185.2 million in general fund-supported general obligation bonds for the southeast Wisconsin freeway megaprojects program to fund the I-94 East-West reconstruction project in Milwaukee County.
- Increases General Transportation Aids by 3 percent in both 2026 and 2027, which will provide municipalities with \$10.3 million more in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$22.9 million in fiscal year 2026-27. Counties will see aid increase by \$2.9 million and \$6.9 million in those same years, respectively. Additionally, the budget provides a 10 percent increase to paratransit aids, increasing funding by \$687,600 over the biennium.
- Improves safety on Milwaukee County expressways with \$38 million in expressway policing aids.

- Continues significant investments in the local roads improvement program with \$100 million SEG in the program's discretionary supplemental grants.
- Invests in rural transportation infrastructure with \$150 million SEG to continue the successful Agricultural Roads Improvement Program, 20 percent of which is directed to be grants for local bridges and culverts identified as being in poor condition, approximately \$30 million. This will help support farmers and producers and the state's agricultural and forestry industries in moving products to market on roads that are safe and efficient, while improving the quality of life in rural communities across the state.
- Provides \$50 million SEG for the harbor assistance program, including \$15 million for the Menominee Harbor project and \$20 million for the Port of Green Bay.

### DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

In 2024, Wisconsin tourism saw its third record-breaking year in a row and generated a historic \$25.8 billion economic impact. We know that making significant investments in the Department of Tourism works; the 2023-25 budget provided a historic \$34 million GPR over the biennium for the department to raise Wisconsin's profile as a premier business, cultural, and recreational destination, especially as part of the National Football League draft and Republican National Convention events. As a result, a record-high 114.4 million visits to the state in 2024, supporting a record-high \$1.7 billion in local and state tax revenue and 182,000 full- and part-time jobs. This budget continues our efforts to bolster tourism, including:

- After several years of demonstrated success in strengthening our recreation economy and quality of life, this budget makes the Office of Outdoor Recreation, created by Governor Evers in the 2019-21 budget, permanent by providing two permanent positions and funding of \$184,000 GPR in each year.
- Matching the 2023-25 investment in the last state budget of \$31 million GPR over the biennium for tourism marketing, which will help the agency attract events and increase advertising in key tourism markets.
- Creating a State Film Office and providing one new position as well as authority to provide up to \$5 million annually for film production tax credits to attract film opportunities to the state.
- Providing \$5 million for a Taliesin Preservation Grant to support projects that sustain Taliesin's unique mix of nature and Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture in Spring Green, Wisconsin, such as an education center, upgraded visitor amenities, and structural improvements.

Additionally, this budget will enhance the visitor experience in Wisconsin by:

- Providing three positions and associated funding to support the planning, preparation and operation of the new, state-of-the-art Wisconsin History Center, scheduled to open in 2027.

- Providing \$340,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$222 GPR in fiscal year 2026-27 to make security and safety improvements at historic sites across the state.

## **SUPPORTING HEALTHIER WISCONSINITES**

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

This budget makes historic investments in hospitals across the state, which will support Wisconsin's healthcare industry and ensure Wisconsinites have access to quality, affordable healthcare.

These critical investments come at a time of significant uncertainty from the federal government. Due to potentially imminent federal law changes, the 2025-27 biennial budget may be the last opportunity Wisconsin has to adjust its hospital assessment in order to efficiently use federal funding to significantly increase hospital reimbursement and decrease the GPR cost of the Medicaid program.

- Specifically, the 2025-27 biennial budget increases the hospital assessment from \$419,335,500 SEG annually to \$1,507,096,900 SEG annually and increases access payments to hospitals from \$679,856,500 all funds annually to \$2,686,447,200 all funds annually. This will substantially increase Medicaid reimbursement to hospitals and provide stability to the healthcare industry as a whole. This policy change will also increase the transfer to the Medical Assistance Trust Fund, saving the state approximately \$298 million GPR annually.

- This budget also fully funds the state’s critical safety net programs including the Medical Assistance cost-to-continue, SeniorCare, Supplemental Security Income and Caretaker Supplements, Income Maintenance Consortia, Medicaid and FoodShare Administration, Funeral and Cemetery Aids, the Wisconsin Chronic Disease Program, and the FoodShare Employment and Training Program.
  
- The budget also makes much needed investments in Medicaid rates paid to providers for critical services. The 2025-27 biennial budget provides over \$53 million all funds to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for personal care, obstetrics, private duty nursing, opioid treatment, chiropractic services, sedation dentistry, residential opioid treatment and home health services.
  
- This budget also makes significant investments in public health. These critical investments will help to ensure Wisconsinites have access to care in their communities. Specifically, the budget does this by:
  - Increasing the UW Hospital and Clinics uncompensated care supplement by \$10 million GPR annually,
  - Providing grants of \$35 million GPR annually to support adult level one trauma hospitals,
  - Creating a regional tertiary care center supplement of \$15 million GPR annually,
  - Providing \$800,000 GPR annually for federally-qualified health centers to increase grants to a total of \$7,190,000 GPR annually,

- Providing \$750,000 GPR annually for free and charitable clinics to increase grants to a total of \$3,000,000 GPR annually; and
- Providing \$200,000 GPR annually to health center look-alikes.

This budget also:

- Provides \$2 million all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 to fund the WisCaregiver Career program to help address the state's shortage of certified nursing assistants and direct care professionals.
- Provides \$3.8 million all funds over the biennium to increase base allocations for the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), which serve as a vital bridge between Wisconsin families and systems of care.
- Provides \$15.8 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the state mental health institutes to address a projected deficit from fiscal year 2024-25 in the civil patient treatment program.
- Provides \$10 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Joint Finance Committee's program supplements appropriation to fund grants for crisis urgent care and observation facilities.
- Provides \$10 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Joint Finance Committee's program supplements appropriation to fund grants to Rogers Behavioral Health for

the development of an integrated mental health campus in the Chippewa Valley to offer services to adults, adolescents, and children.

- Provides \$7 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to support the call centers that provide crisis intervention services and crisis care coordination to those who contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Provides \$1 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 for a grant to Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan for the purchase and renovation of the Libertas Treatment Center in Chippewa Falls for a 50-bed treatment center for adult males with substance use disorder needs.
- Provides \$1.8 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Joint Finance Committee's program supplements appropriation for grants to psychiatric residential treatment facilities; and
- Reduces the UW Medical Foundation intergovernmental transfer payment.

#### OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

- Increases the maximum amount of reinsurance payments in the Wisconsin Health care Stability Plan from \$230 million to \$265 million beginning with plan year 2026 and directs the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance to pay all reinsurance claims for plan year 2025, up to a maximum of \$265 million

#### MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN

- This budget provides \$750,000 GPR over the biennium to the Medical College of Wisconsin to support the North Side Milwaukee Health Center Family Medicine Program and Northwest Wisconsin Resident Rotation program to build the state's healthcare workforce by training doctors locally with the goal of retaining them in Wisconsin and expanding access to healthcare.

#### DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- Supports the operations of the Wisconsin Veterans homes by transferring \$5 million from the general fund in fiscal year 2025-26.
- Increases transportation grants to counties by \$75,000 SEG annually.
- Increases the grant to Camp American Legion by \$25,000 SEG annually.
- As I proposed, provide an additional \$64,600 SEG annually to grants for county veterans service officers and tribal veterans service officers to provide a 5 percent increase to these service offices that serve our veterans in communities across the state.
- Creates a new grant program funded with \$2.5 million GPR to fund housing and comprehensive support services to veterans.



- The capital budget invests over \$35 million from all fund sources into needed projects at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes to repair plumbing, abate lead, replace boilers, and improve technology. In addition, over \$3.4 million is devoted to continuing expansion of the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery.
- Provides \$5 million GPR to support a grant for war memorials in populous counties to honor our nation's heroes.

## **BUILDING SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES**

### DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- Provides \$527,700 all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$698,200 all funds in fiscal year 2026-27 to fund the department's GPS Sex Offender Registry program.
- Provides \$2,040,100 GPR annually to support the Division of Community Corrections' reentry programming aimed at reducing recidivism and community reintegration.
- Provides \$15,000,000 to develop preliminary plans and specifications for the realignment of the Department of Corrections and the ultimate closure of Green Bay Correctional Institution.

- Provides \$130,749,000 to build a second Type 1 Juvenile Correctional Facility in Dane County, bringing the state another step closer to closing Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and relocating youth safely.
- Provides \$1,500,000 to develop preliminary plans and specifications for the construction of a new 16 bed facility at the Grow Academy.

#### DISTRICT ATTORNEYS, PUBLIC DEFENDERS, AND COURTS

- Provides \$5,987,300 GPR over the biennium to allow one-step of pay progression in each year for assistant and deputy district attorneys to increase retention of experienced attorneys.
- Provides an additional 43.0 FTE GPR assistant district attorney positions across the state over the biennium.
- Provides an additional 12.5 FTE PR assistant district attorney positions for Milwaukee County.
- Provides an additional 1.5 FTE GPR assistant state public defender attorney positions and 11.5 FTE GPR support staff positions across the state over the biennium.

- Provides \$5,688,900 GPR over the biennium to allow one-step of pay progression in each year for assistant state public defender attorneys to increase retention of experienced attorneys.
- Provides \$10 million GPR in each year to counties for circuit court costs.
- Provides \$2 million PR annually for the consolidated court automation program (CCAP).
- Provides \$282,400 GPR over the biennium and a 1.0 FTE GPR attorney for the Judicial Council.

#### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

- Provides \$7.5 GPR million in fiscal year 2025-26 for cybersecurity and compliance enhancements at the Department of Justice to comply with federal requirements for criminal justice and information systems security.
- Provides \$20 million GPR in the biennium for grants to crime victim service providers and child advocacy centers to supplement federal Victims of Crime Act grants. Provides \$163,500 GPR in each year and 2.0 FTE GPR two-year project positions to administer grants for crime victim services.
- Provides \$1,570,900 PR over the biennium and 13.0 FTE PR permanent positions to support the Office of School Safety.

- Provides \$850,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 for a replacement printer for concealed carry weapon (CCW) licenses.
- Provides \$43,300 GPR of one-time funding in each year for arson safety equipment at the State Fire Marshal's Office.
- Increases grants to child advocacy centers by \$2 million GPR in each year.
- Provides \$2 million GPR of one-time funding in each year for law enforcement agencies in the Milwaukee area to implement data sharing among agencies.
- Provides \$319,300 GPR over the biennium and 2.0 FTE GPR positions to support the Missing Child Alert system.
- Ensures that \$500,000 GPR appropriated during the 2023-25 biennium for the community-oriented policing-house grant program remains available in the 2025-27 biennium. The program would be extended for two years under pending separate legislation.

#### DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

- Provides \$79.7 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to fund the WISCOM public safety interoperable communications system.

- Provides \$2 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 for pre-disaster flood resilience grants.
- Provides \$3 million SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2026-27 for urban search and rescue.
- Provides \$3 million SEG in each fiscal year to the state disaster assistance program.
- Provides \$100,000 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 for a pilot grant program for Live 911 for grants to public safety answering points to enable real-time video and multimedia communications between public safety answering points and individuals who call for emergency services.
- Provides \$200,000 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 to provide a grant to fund a portion of the renovation costs of the training facility for Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue.

## **PROTECTING & CONSERVING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES**

### STATE PARKS

Wisconsin's system of state parks, forests, and trails has been the gem of our state for 125 years, boasting over 100 protected areas and serving over 20 million visitors annually. To ensure facilities in these recreational areas are well maintained, this budget:

- Provides \$5 million SEG in ongoing funding for the development of parks and trails across the state park system.
- Increases targeted fees to bring in additional revenue to support operations and property development at state parks and forests. These fee changes include:
  - A \$5 increase for nonresident campsite reservations.
  - A \$10 increase for electric campsite reservations at Devil’s Lake State Park, High Cliff State Park, Kohler-Andrae State Park, Peninsula State Park, and Willow River State Park, and a \$5 increase for electric campsite reservations at all other department-owned properties.
  - An increase to nonresident vehicle admission rates including: a \$9 increase for nonresident daily admission, a \$10 increase for nonresident daily bus admission, a \$4 for nonresident daily nursing home bus admission, and a \$12 for nonresident annual and additional annual admission stickers.
- Provides \$1,394,00 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$1,435,700 SEG in fiscal year 2026-27 to support property operations across the state park system. This funding will help address rising costs over the last several years due to inflation and increased visitation rates.
- Provides \$458,900 SEG in each year of the biennium to invest in technology to improve visitor experience and staff efficiency.

## FORESTRY

Preserving our forestland and other outdoor spaces is not only important for Wisconsinites' health and well-being but also key to our state's economic success as Wisconsin's forestry industry is a critical facet of the state's economy. This budget increases funding for state, local, and private forest landowners to improve the health and productivity of forests. This budget:

- Provides the Department of Natural Resources with \$1 million SEG to award a grant to conduct a forestry industrywide strategic plan to help ensure the long-term economic viability of Wisconsin's forestry industry.
- Provides \$250,000 SEG in each year for the County Forest Administration Grant program to support salaries for county forest administrators. Up to 50 percent of the annual salary and fringe benefits for county forest administrators and assistant county forest administrators may be covered by the grant program, supporting Wisconsin counties in their forestry activities and planning.
- Provides \$250,000 SEG in each year for the Sustainable Forestry Grant program to support sustainable forest management projects on county forest land, such as storm-related projects or hiring temporary staff to address short-term workload projects.

- Provides \$130,000 SEG in each year for the County Forest Wildlife Habitat Grant Program to support wildlife habitat improvements and management activities on county forest lands.
- Provides \$1,220,400 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$1,062,000 SEG in fiscal year 2026-27 as one-time funding for fire suppression equipment at the Department of Natural Resources to more effectively combat wildfires.
- Provides \$2,066,500 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$2,167,500 SEG in fiscal year 2026-27 as one-time funding to be used to contract for the removal of hazardous trees on departmental properties. The volume of hazardous trees has increased due to severe weather events, invasive species and tree diseases and represent a significant risk to visitor safety.

### CLEAN WATER

Every Wisconsinite deserves access to clean drinking water and to be able to trust that the water coming from their tap is safe and free of harmful contaminants like lead and PFAs, among others. Over the last four years, my administration has worked to identify and remediate contamination in ground, surface, and drinking water and to improve water quality for all Wisconsinites. To continue building upon this work, this budget:



- Provides \$2 million environmental SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 for the development of a remedial action plan for remediation of arsenic-contaminated sediment in the Kewaunee Marsh.
- Provides \$4 million environmental SEG over the biennium to be used for remedial action at the Amcast Superfund site.
- Provides \$6 million in bonding to be used for the Kenosha Dunes restoration project.
- Provides \$7.5 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 for contaminated sediment removal from sites in the Great Lakes or its tributaries that are on Wisconsin's impaired waters list to continue protecting this resource.
- Provides \$4 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 for Urban Nonpoint Source cost-sharing and the Municipal Flood Control program. The Urban Nonpoint Source cost-sharing program offers competitive grants to local governments for the control of pollution from diffuse urban sources that is carried by storm water runoff, and the Municipal Flood Control program provides cost sharing to municipalities for activities such as property acquisition and removal of structures, floodproofing and flood elevation of structures, and flood mapping.
- Provides \$6.5 million GPR for grants to counties for capital projects that implement land and water resource management plans under the Targeted Runoff Management program, which can reimburse costs for agricultural or urban runoff

management practices in targeted, critical geographic areas with surface water or groundwater quality concerns. The budget also provides an additional \$200,000 SEG in each year for noncapital projects under the Targeted Runoff Management program.

- Provides \$7 million GPR for grants to counties for implementation of land and water resource management plans, including cost-share grants to landowners that install conservation practices on their land, such as erosion prevention strategies, through the Soil and Water Resource Management program.
- Provides \$100,000 GPR in each year to provide additional equipment in the Bureau of Laboratory Services at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.
- Provides \$4 million GPR for the repair, reconstruction, and removal of dams.
- Wisconsin farmers are some of the most ardent stewards of our land and water. Therefore, this budget provides \$250,000 SEG in each year to support the Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant program. Funding from this program enables producers and producer-led groups to implement nonpoint source pollution abatement strategies to improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality.
- Provides \$1 million SEG in each year on a one-time basis to continue the commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program and \$800,000 SEG in each year on a one-time bases to continue the cover crop insurance program. The Nitrogen

Optimization Pilot Program grants aim to refine and enhance the understanding of new methods that optimize commercial nitrogen applied to agricultural fields, helping to protect soil and water resources, while the cover crop insurance program assists farmers with rebates of \$5 per acre of a cover crop planted for crop insurance premiums paid on those acres.

- Provides over \$1.8 million all funds over the biennium to update Department of Natural Resources systems and improve customer service for Wisconsinites.
- Provides an additional \$5,625,400 all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$6,398,300 all funds in fiscal year 2026-27 to support county conservation staff around the state. County conservation staff are the boots on the ground supporting landowners implementing conservation practices.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK FOR WISCONSIN**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AID**

- Provides a \$7 million annual increase to the Payments for Municipal Services program, which is the first increase the program has seen since 2003. This will restore program funding to approximately 50 percent of the state's share of what local governments are entitled for providing services to state government facilities.

## TRIBAL NATIONS

- Provides one-time funding of \$1.5 million PR-S Tribal gaming revenues annually for grants to nonprofit food assistance organizations that purchase and distribute food to Tribal elders and to entities supporting the growth and operation of participating food producers, with a focus on Indigenous-based and local food producers.
- Provides \$11 million PR Tribal gaming revenues to make grants of equal amounts to Tribes to support programs that meet the needs of Tribal citizens, as determined by each Tribe.
- Provides \$60,000 PR Tribal gaming revenues annually, on a one-time basis, to support an intergovernmental training program that will be led by the Oneida Nation.
- Provides \$2 million PR annually, on a one-time basis to the Joint Finance Committee's supplemental appropriation to provide grants to each county in which the headquarters of a federally recognized tribe is located.

## ETHICS COMMISSION

- Provides \$299,800 all funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$284,800 all funds in fiscal year 2026-27, to extend information technology contractor positions, continue

development of the Campaign Finance Information System and support other equipment for the Ethics Commission.

#### WISCONSIN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

- Provides \$197,600 all funds annually to support maintaining and hosting the clerk training and learning management system, the Election Commission's website and support multifactor authentication technology for the WisVote system.
- Provides \$37,700 GPR annually to fully fund the state's membership with the Electronic Registration Information Center.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

- Provides \$321,400 PR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$428,600 PR in fiscal year 2026-27 in one-time funding to develop a new assessment system for the Public Service Commission that has enhanced data collection and reporting capability.
- Provides \$2 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Joint Committee on Finance supplemental appropriation to transfer to the Public Service Commission to conduct a nuclear power plant feasibility study, as specified by 2025 Wisconsin Act 12.

## DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

- Provides \$546,000 PR annually, on a one-time basis, to the Division of Enterprise Technology to provide contractual resource services and IT equipment to the Department of Safety and Professional Services.
- Provides \$636,500 PR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$783,500 PR in fiscal year 2026-27 to fully fund the state building program's project management system and provide a geographic information software system.
- Provides \$278,000 PR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$316,300 PR in fiscal year 2026-27 to the Division of Capitol Police to support pay increases approved in 2023-25, improvements to the command post and dispatch center, and specialized security and protective equipment.
- Provides \$175,000 PR, \$25,000 of which would be ongoing, to support the development of a new license system for processing bingo and raffle licenses and the Office of Charitable Gaming as a whole. This would be funded by an increase in the bingo and raffle licenses.
- Provides \$3 million SEG from the local government fund in 2025-26 to create a support local grant writing and compliance assistance program.
- Provides \$10,000,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to provide payments to WisconsinEye for an endowment fund. This includes \$250,000 for which no match

is required, and \$9,750,000 that WisconsinEye can receive if it raises an equal match in non-state funds.

- Provides \$500,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Wisconsin Maritime Museum for maintenance of the USS Cobia.

#### BUILDING COMMISSION

- Provides top-line funding of over \$2.6 billion for the state building program for all capital projects in motion from all funding sources.
- Responsibly uses \$326 million GPR in lieu of bonding for a portion of the state's repair and renovation costs to avoid the excess cost of interest related to bonding.
- Provides \$50 million PR in fiscal year 2025-26 to continue the successful Local Projects Program, providing grants to local governments and nonstate entities for local construction projects which serve a public, statewide purpose, such as clinics, arts centers and museums, public libraries, and more.
- Provides \$32 million GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 under the Building Commission for transfer to the building trust fund for advanced planning in the 2025-27 biennium. This funding will enhance the accuracy of preplanning project cost estimates thereby providing better projections for future capital budgeting costs.

- Invests over \$24 million from all fund sources to renovate conservation warden and ranger facilities at Devil's Lake State Park, the Richard Bong State Recreation Area, along with the Spring Green and Wausaukee ranger stations, and make essential trail repairs along the Badger State Trail.
- Invests over \$40 million from all fund sources on numerous needed facility improvements, including progress on new and improved readiness centers across the state.

#### DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYEE TRUST FUNDS

- Provides \$71 million SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 to the Department of Employee Trust Funds to support the implementation of the department's pension administration system over a five-year period.

#### LEGISLATURE

- Provides 2.0 FTE positions and \$144,600 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$192,800 GPR in fiscal year 2026-27 to the Legislative Technology Services Bureau.

#### COMPENSATION RESERVES

- Provides \$200.9 million GPR over the biennium for a general wage adjustment for most state employees at state agencies and the University of Wisconsin System of 3 percent in July of 2025, and an additional 2 percent in July of 2026.



- Provides over \$2 million GPR over the biennium for targeted market and parity wage adjustments for employees within certain classifications in state agencies to better align their wages to those paid by private and other public sector employers.
- Provides \$3.8 million GPR over the biennium to institute a pay progression for social workers and certain employees working in information technology classifications.
- Provides \$2.7 million GPR over the biennium to support the addition of a \$7 per hour add-on for special agent classifications within the Department of Justice.
- Provides \$4.1 million GPR over the biennium to enhance the pay progression for probation and parole agents at the Department of Corrections, and provides parity increases for correctional field supervisor positions.
- Provides over \$4 million GPR over the biennium to support the continuation of the existing \$5 per hour add-on for correctional officers, sergeants and agents working as officers within Waupun Correctional Institution.
- Provides \$3.4 million GPR over the biennium to support the \$5 per hour add-on for correctional officers, sergeants and agents working as officers within institutions with vacancy rates greater than 40 percent among security classifications.
- Provides \$164.8 million GPR over the biennium to fully fund fringe benefit costs during the 2025-27 biennium.

I have always believed that what's best for our kids is what's best for our state, and after three months of difficult negotiations, I am proud to be signing my fourth bipartisan budget as Governor that makes critical investments in our kids, families, and communities across our state. This budget is proof of all we can accomplish when we put politics aside to get good things done for the people we are here to serve. I want to thank legislative leaders for being willing to come to the table so we could get a real, meaningful bipartisan budget done for Wisconsin.

I also would be remiss if I did not extend my deep gratitude to my staff, the dedicated public servants at the State Budget Office, my cabinet, and leaders and workers from across our administration and legislative service agencies for the many long days and nights they have put into supporting this important work and helping finalize this state budget for the people of our state. The biennial budget is an entire enterprise-wide effort, and the people of Wisconsin are better off thanks to your hard work, dedication, and commitment to serving our great state.

While there is much work ahead, this bipartisan budget proves that, despite these divisive times and the policy differences and disagreements we may share as elected officials, in Wisconsin, we still believe in being able to work together with the collaborative and innovative spirit that Wisconsinites have embraced for generations. Our work together building the future we want for our kids and our grandkids continues in earnest tomorrow.

Forward, and for Wisconsin, always.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Evers", written in a cursive style.

Tony Evers

Governor

July 3, 2025

## VETO MESSAGE

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR KIDS	
	1. Grants to Lakeland STAR Academy .....	1
	2. Funding for Wisconsin Works Case Management Incentive Payments .....	1
B.	BUILDING A 21ST-CENTURY ECONOMY & WORKFORCE	
	3. Program Revenue Account Transfer .....	1
	4. Windows to Work Funding.....	2
C.	BUILDING SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES	
	5. Tribal County Grants .....	2
	6. Tribal Grants .....	3
	7. I 94 Freeway Signs in Racine County .....	3
	8. Village of Warrens Zeda Street Project.....	3
	9. Statutory Daily Rates.....	4
	10. Capital Development Staffing and Institution Maintenance Staffing .....	4
	11. Advance Planning for the Department of Corrections .....	4
	12. Noise Barriers on I 894 and I 41 .....	5
	13. I 94 Corridor Study in Western Waukesha County.....	6
D.	PROTECTING & CONSERVING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES	
	14. Deerskin River Dredging Earmark .....	6
	15. Wisconsin Rapids East Riverbank Earmark.....	6
	16. Brillion Marsh Dredging Earmark.....	7
	17. Iowa County Grant – County Hwy C .....	7
	18. Daily Vehicle Admissions for State Parks .....	8
	19. Highway Flooding.....	8
E.	ADDITIONAL KEY PRIORITIES	
	20. Financial Assets Management .....	8
	21. Positions for the Legislative Audit Bureau .....	9
	22. Funding for Actuarial Audit Services.....	9
	23. Delete Vacant Board of Commissioners of Public Lands Position .....	10

## **A. DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR KIDS**

### **1. Grants to Lakeland STAR Academy**

*Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.255 (2) (ag)], 23, 24, 9134 and 9434*

These provisions provide \$250,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$500,000 GPR in fiscal year 2026-27 as one-time funding in a newly created annual appropriation for grants to the Lakeland STAR Academy. Specifically, they require the Department of Public Instruction to provide a grant to the Lakeland UHS School District for the Lakeland STAR Academy. The appropriation would be repealed on July 1, 2027.

I am partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.255 (2) (ag)] and vetoing the remaining sections in their entirety to eliminate the grant program for Lakeland STAR Academy. As I have repeatedly said, I object to providing state grants to specific schools. Our responsibility as a state is to provide the necessary level of state dollars across a number of critical programs that serve schools statewide, such as school nutrition, special education and mental health categorical aid programs. While this budget has made significant progress on special education funding, it still does not make investments at the level I proposed, and it fails to address many other critical areas of school funding. As I have stated previously, there are hundreds of charter schools authorized by public school districts, and it is unfair and inequitable to single out one school for a state grant. Also, as I have said before, every kid in Wisconsin should be able to get a great education in a public school regardless of what district they live in, and state funding decisions should not pick winners and losers among our kids.

### **2. Funding for Wisconsin Works Case Management Incentive Payments**

*Section 170*

This section establishes the allocation for Wisconsin Works case management incentive payments under s. 49.175, reducing the allocation from \$2,700,000 to \$1,000,000 for each fiscal year in the 2025-27 biennium.

I am vetoing this section because I object to the decrease in the annual allocation for this program at a time when federal funding for programs that support the needs of low-income individuals is at risk. As a result of this veto the current law amount of \$2,700,000 in each fiscal year is restored.

## **B. BUILDING A 21ST-CENTURY ECONOMY & WORKFORCE**

### **3. Program Revenue Account Transfer**

*Section 9238*

This section requires the Department of Safety and Professional Services to transfer \$5,000,000 from the program revenue appropriation account under s. 20.165 (1) (g) to the general fund in

fiscal year 2025-26. This appropriation funds the department's licensing, credentialing, rule-making and other regulatory functions.

I am vetoing this section in its entirety as I object to this transfer of funds. The regulation of licensing and credentialing supports our skilled workforce and protects the people of our state. These funds, generally consisting of fees assessed for services provided by the department, should be retained by the department to enhance service levels, lessen time to receiving a credential or license, and generally increase the workforce in much-needed areas.

#### **4. Windows to Work Funding**

##### *Sections 326 and 9108 (2)*

These sections direct the Department of Corrections to allocate \$1,000,000 GPR in fiscal year 2025-26 to fund education and vocational training utilizing virtual reality technologies and modify statutory language describing community services established by the department to include education and vocational training utilizing virtual reality technologies.

I am vetoing these sections because I object to the Legislature placing additional constraints on the department and its workforce development programming. Given the Legislature's failure to properly fund existing commitments within the department's reentry unit, it is important that any additional funding is allocated for areas the department has identified as highest need. For example, the department's technical mobile labs, critical to providing career and technical education programming, increasing employment opportunities upon release, and decreasing recidivism, received no additional funding. By vetoing this provision, I am providing the department the flexibility to prioritize reentry programming that demonstrates the greatest success while keeping our communities safe.

### **C. BUILDING SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES**

#### **5. Tribal County Grants**

##### *Section 9*

This provision directs the Department of Administration to distribute grants of equal amounts to each county in the state in which the headquarters of a federally recognized Tribe is located. A separate provision of the budget bill would create an appropriation at the department that could receive \$2,000,000 annually of Tribal gaming revenues from funding reserved in a Joint Committee on Finance supplemental appropriation.

I am partially vetoing section 9 to remove the requirement that the grant funds be distributed equally to each county in this state in which a federally recognized Tribe is headquartered. I object to mandating that these amounts be distributed evenly, when the department can best determine the appropriate distribution of these revenues to the relevant counties, including taking into account the impact to counties who have been affected by the 2022 federal court decision regarding property taxation and other local needs.

## **6. Tribal Grants**

### *Section 9101 (2)*

This section would direct the Department of Administration, in the 2025-27 biennium, to award \$11,000,000 of Tribal gaming revenues in grants in equal amounts to each of the nine federally recognized Tribes that received similar grants in the 2023-25 biennium.

I am partially vetoing section 9101 (2) to remove the requirement that the grant funds be distributed exclusively to the nine federally recognized Tribes that received these grants in the 2023-25 biennium, as well as the limitation of funding to the 2025-27 biennium, while retaining the statutory language that provides \$11,000,000 PR annually in general grants to tribes. I object to singling out two Tribal Nations to be excluded from receiving the general grant funds, as this goes against the language and spirit of the Tribal compacts from which these gaming revenues are derived. Each of the Tribal Nations are partners of the state. Their citizens are Wisconsin citizens. The Legislature has no right to treat some Tribes or their citizens differently on purely arbitrary bases by denying them general grants intended for all federally recognized Tribes. As a result of this veto, all 11 federally recognized Tribes in the state will be entitled to an equal share of the \$11,000,000 each year, and the \$11,000,000 annual general grants will be included in the 2027-29 adjusted base.

## **7. I 94 Freeway Signs in Racine County**

### *Section 280*

This section mandates that the Department of Transportation erect and maintain two directional signs along eastbound and westbound interstate highway 94 at the County Trunk Highway K interchange in Racine County displaying the words "The Prairie School" and "The Wind Point Lighthouse."

I am vetoing this section because my objections remain the same as when I vetoed 2023 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 603, which imposed the same requirements on the department. I continue to object to requiring the department to erect signage that would put it out of compliance with its own policies that are derived from federal rules regarding the types of signage that are allowed to be placed on an interstate highway interchange.

## **8. Village of Warrens Zeda Street Project**

### *Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.395 (2) (fw)], 49 and 9144 (5)*

These provisions require a one-time grant of \$25,000 SEG from the local government fund under the newly created appropriation under s. 20.395 (2) (fw) to be awarded to the village of Warrens for the Zeda Street project no later than June 30, 2027.

I am vetoing these provisions as I object to providing additional resources to the village of Warrens when they already have access to \$25,000 of funding which may be used for any eligible project in the village by June 30, 2029. Given that they already have access to this

funding, I further object to singling one community out for additional funding when the transportation needs of many communities remain unmet under this proposed budget.

## **9. Statutory Daily Rates**

### *Section 327m*

These provisions establish a per person daily cost assessment to counties of \$2,501 in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$2,758 in fiscal year 2026-27 for care of a juvenile who is in a Type 1 juvenile correctional facility or transferred from a juvenile correctional facility to an inpatient treatment facility. The daily rate in fiscal year 2024-25 is \$1,268.

I am partially vetoing these provisions to establish a daily rate of \$501 in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$758 in fiscal year 2026-27 because I object to establishing a daily rate that is unaffordable to counties. I have heard loud and clear from counties that the current daily rate is burdensome and will detrimentally impact public safety. Unbelievably, despite that clear message from the counties, the Legislature has chosen to increase that rate by over \$1,000 per day. This increase and funding model is untenable, and counties have expressed that this unaffordable increase will have serious and detrimental effects on other county services. With this veto, I am establishing daily rates while still ensuring it is manageable for local partners. My budget recommended providing GPR to the Department of Corrections to buy down the daily rate. I urge the Legislature to revisit this issue in separate legislation and appropriate those additional GPR funds to the department.

## **10. Capital Development Staffing and Institution Maintenance Staffing**

### *Section 9108 (1)*

This section assigns a 1.0 FTE GPR electrician position to the Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution.

I am vetoing this section to remove the specificity of locating the position at Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution because I object to the Legislature singling out one specific institution when there is a demonstrated need at multiple correctional facilities throughout the state. This will allow the Department of Corrections the flexibility to determine where the greatest area of need is across all 36 institutions and provide the necessary staffing.

## **11. Advance Planning for the Department of Corrections**

### *Section 9104 (7) (a)*

This provision allocates \$15,000,000 in funding from the State Building Commission's planning and design appropriation under s. 20.867 (2) (r) to develop preliminary plans and specifications for construction projects contributing to a realignment of the Department of Corrections and leading to the closure of the Green Bay Correctional Institution by 2029.

I am partially vetoing this provision to remove the reference to the 2029 deadline for the closure of the Green Bay Correctional Institution because I object to the Legislature assigning a date by



which Green Bay Correctional Institution must be closed while providing virtually no real, meaningful, or concrete plan to do so.

Let me be clear: I support closing Green Bay Correctional Institution. Indeed, my administration spent years working on a comprehensive corrections reform plan to be able to close Green Bay Correctional Institution quickly, safely, and cost efficiently, which was included in the biennial budget I introduced months ago. I proposed a "domino" series of facility changes, improvements, and modernization efforts across Wisconsin's correctional institutions while improving public safety by expanding workforce training opportunities to reduce the likelihood that people might reoffend after they are released. Under that plan, Green Bay Correctional Institution would be closed in 2029. Instead, the Legislature sent this budget with that same deadline and no plan of which to speak.

As of this writing, there are 1,133 people at Green Bay Correctional Institution; the Legislature provides nowhere for these maximum-security-status individuals to go if Green Bay Correctional Institution is closed. As of this writing, there are 362 individuals who work at Green Bay Correctional Institution; the Legislature provides nothing to make sure they have job security, continuity, and the opportunity to continue working at the Department of Corrections if Green Bay Correctional Institution is closed. As of this writing, Wisconsin has the capacity to house 17,638 individuals at its correctional institutions but there are 23,375 people living in Department of Corrections institutions across Wisconsin; the Legislature provides no steps whatsoever to stabilize the state's skyrocketing prison population. The list goes on. Wisconsin already has about a decade's worth of painful experience learning how well it works in practice to set unrealistic, artificial timelines and due dates for closing prison facilities without a complete and thorough plan for implementation: look no further than Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake School today, nearly a decade after a bill was passed in 2017 to require their closure in 2021. It is 2025 and both schools still remain open. It would be foolish and dangerous to attempt to take a similar approach with a maximum-security institution like Green Bay Correctional Institution.

Green Bay Correctional Institution should close—on that much, the Legislature and I agree. It simply is not responsible or tenable to require doing so by a deadline absent a plan to actually accomplish that goal by the timeline set. I look forward to continuing this conversation in the weeks and months ahead and remain hopeful that our bipartisan work on this budget will help ensure we can find common ground on a safe, realistic, and cost-effective plan to close Green Bay Correctional Institution this session.

## **12. Noise Barriers on I 894 and I 41**

### *Section 9144 (3)*

This section requires the Department of Transportation to allocate \$9,100,000 under the state highway rehabilitation program to construct noise attenuation barriers along I 894, from 76th Street to 92nd Street, and along I 41, from 500 feet north of Beloit Road to West Howard Avenue, in Milwaukee County.

I am partially vetoing this section as I object to the limitations in placement of noise barriers leaving gaps in the noise attenuation barrier that would undermine its purpose and degrade the effectiveness of the entire project. My veto will allow the department to ensure placement of noise barriers where they are needed along these projects.

**13. I 94 Corridor Study in Western Waukesha County**

*Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.395 (3) (bq)] and 9144 (10)*

These sections require the Department of Transportation to commence the preparation of an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment for the improvement and expansion of interstate highway 94 from County Trunk Highway SS to the Jefferson County border and increase funding to s. 20.395 (3) (bq) by \$8,000,000 in fiscal year 2025-26.

I am partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.395 (3) (bq)] by lining out the amount under s. 20.395 (3) (bq) and writing in a smaller amount that reduces the appropriation by \$8,000,000 in fiscal year 2025-26 and am vetoing section 9144 (10) to remove the requirement for this study. I am vetoing these provisions because I object to circumventing the Department of Transportation's process for developing corridor studies through the ordinary Transportation Project Commission process. This veto ensures that the Department of Transportation will be able to use traffic counts and other relevant measures to prioritize future corridor study locations and direct its efforts to projects that best address the transportation needs of Wisconsin.

**E. PROTECTING & CONSERVING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES**

**14. Deerskin River Dredging Earmark**

*Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (4) (kr)], 34 and 9132 (7)*

These provisions create a new biennial appropriation and provide funding for the Department of Natural Resources to provide a grant to the town of Washington in Vilas County to dredge the Deerskin River.

I am vetoing sections 34 and 9132 (7) in their entirety and partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (4) (kr)] because I object to providing an earmark for a natural resources project when the Legislature has abandoned its responsibility to reauthorize and ensure the continuation of the immensely popular Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program. For over three decades, the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program has benefited millions of Wisconsinites and consistently earned strong bipartisan support. Instead of renewing the program and helping the many, the Legislature has opted to benefit the politically connected few. The Legislature must do its job and renew the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program.

**15. Wisconsin Rapids East Riverbank Earmark**

*Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (5) (hs)], 35 and 9132 (5)*

These provisions create a new Department of Natural Resources annual appropriation and provide funding to the city of Wisconsin Rapids for the repair of a retaining wall as part of the Wisconsin Rapids Riverbank project.

I am vetoing sections 35 and 9132 (5) in their entirety and partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (5) (hs)] because I object to providing an earmark for a natural resources

project when the Legislature has abandoned its responsibility to reauthorize and ensure the continuation of the immensely popular Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program. For over three decades, the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program has benefited millions of Wisconsinites and consistently earned strong bipartisan support. Instead of renewing the program and helping the many, the Legislature has opted to benefit the politically connected few. The Legislature must do its job and renew the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program.

## **16. Brillion Marsh Dredging Earmark**

### *Section 9132 (11)*

This section requires the Department of Natural Resources to expend \$70,000 to conduct a dredging project in the Manitowoc River in the town of Brillion in Manitowoc County.

I am vetoing this section because I object to providing an earmark for a natural resources project when the Legislature has abandoned its responsibility to reauthorize and ensure the continuation of the immensely popular Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program. For over three decades, the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program has benefited millions of Wisconsinites and consistently earned strong bipartisan support. Instead of renewing the program and helping the many, the Legislature has opted to benefit the politically connected few. The Legislature must do its job and renew the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program.

In the meantime, this veto will provide the department the ability to utilize the funding for the management and protection of the state's water resources and for environmental quality and environmental management purposes rather than for a specific earmark.

## **17. Iowa County Grant – County Highway C**

### *Section 9132 (4)*

This section requires the Department of Natural Resources to award a grant of \$500,000 SEG in fiscal year 2025-26 for a grant to Iowa County for the construction and maintenance of County Trunk Highway C between State Trunk Highway 23 and U.S. Highway 14. The section also requires the grant to be awarded notwithstanding current law certification and prioritization requirements.

I am vetoing this section because I object to limiting the Department of Natural Resources' flexibility to prioritize state park, forest and riverway road projects based on areas of highest need. This veto will provide the department the ability to utilize the funding for roadway projects throughout the state.

Further, I object to providing an earmark for a natural resources project when the Legislature has abandoned its responsibility to reauthorize and ensure the continuation of the immensely popular Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program. For over three decades, the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program has benefited millions of Wisconsinites and consistently earned strong bipartisan support. Instead of renewing the program and helping

the many, the Legislature has opted to benefit the politically connected few. The Legislature must do its job and renew the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program.

## **18. Daily Vehicle Admissions for State Parks**

### *Section 127*

This section requires the Department of Natural Resources to charge a daily vehicle admission fee for entry into state parks of not less than \$19.85 but not more than \$24.85, as determined by the secretary, for any vehicle that has a registration plate from another state.

I am partially vetoing this section to remove the minimum and maximum fees because I object to limiting the ability of the department to determine the appropriate fee for out-of-state vehicle admissions. I further object to the floor for this fee being set higher than the department has expressed is needed in this biennium. As a result of my partial veto, the secretary of the department will be authorized to set appropriate fees.

## **19. Highway Flooding**

### *Sections 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (6) (at)], 36 and 9132 (6)*

These provisions create a new annual appropriation and provide funding for the Department of Natural Resources to provide a grant to the town of Norway in Racine County to assist with the mitigation of water runoff from State Trunk Highway 36.

I am vetoing sections 36 and 9132 (6) in their entirety and partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.370 (6) (at)] because I object to providing an earmark for a natural resources project when the Legislature has abandoned its responsibility to reauthorize and ensure the continuation of the immensely popular Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program. For over three decades, the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program has benefited millions of Wisconsinites and consistently earned strong bipartisan support. Instead of renewing the program and helping the many, the Legislature has opted to benefit the politically connected few. The Legislature must do its job and renew the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program.

## **F. ADDITIONAL KEY PRIORITIES**

## **20. Financial Assets Management**

### *Section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.507 (1) (q)]*

This section provides \$100,000 SEG each year from the conservation fund from moneys received for forestry activities for the acquisition of a new financial portfolio management system, due diligence and asset allocation analyses and investment accounting services.

I am partially vetoing section 17 [as it relates to s. 20.507 (1) (q)] by lining out the appropriation and writing in a smaller amount to reduce the appropriation by \$100,000 SEG in each year for

financial assets management because I object to including funding that does not sufficiently cover the cost of a new portfolio management system, and I object to sourcing the financial management costs from funds attributable to forestry activities. My budget ensured that the board would have the resources necessary for the prudent management of the trust funds, which is essential for the success of the program and its beneficiaries. If the Legislature believes a new portfolio management system is a priority, it should have provided adequate funding from an appropriate source for the board to purchase and maintain the platform. This veto will maintain the funding provided in the appropriation for land asset management, which is appropriately sourced from funds attributable to forestry activities.

## **21. Positions for the Legislative Audit Bureau**

### *Section 17 [as it relates to the funding for positions under s. 20.765 (3) (ka)]*

This provision allocates funding to the Legislative Audit Bureau for the purpose of creating 4.0 FTE financial auditor positions in the bureau's reimbursable audits appropriation under s. 20.765 (3) (ka), beginning in fiscal year 2026-27.

I am partially vetoing this provision by lining out the appropriation under s. 20.765 (3) (ka) and writing in a smaller amount that reduces the appropriation by \$408,400 PR-S in fiscal year 2026-27. I object to this provision because the Legislative Audit Bureau currently has sufficient funding and position authority to fulfill its role of completing statutorily required audits and discretionary audits as directed by the Legislature. I further request that the Department of Administration secretary not allot these funds and not execute the allocated position authority.

## **22. Funding for Actuarial Audit Services**

### *Section 17 [as it relates to funding for actuarial audit services under s. 20.765 (3) (ka)]*

This provision allocates one-time expenditure authority in each year of the biennium to the Legislative Audit Bureau to contract for actuarial audit services that may be required in order to gain audit evidence under accounting standards issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

I am partially vetoing this provision by lining out the appropriation under s. 20.765 (3) (ka) and writing in a smaller amount that reduces the appropriation by \$75,500 PR-S in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$71,800 PR-S in fiscal year 2026-27. I object to increasing funding for these contracts because the Legislative Audit Bureau currently has sufficient funding to contract for actuarial audit services to complete audits required by state law. I further request that the Department of Administration secretary not allot these funds.

## **23. Delete Vacant Board of Commissioners of Public Lands Position**

### *Section 119*

This section eliminates the statutory directive to the executive secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands to appoint a deputy director.

As I did in 2023 Wisconsin Act 19, I am vetoing this section because I believe that having a deputy director provides important backup and support for the executive secretary and the board to achieve the agency's mission. I object to the Legislature eliminating the ability of the executive director to appoint a deputy by reducing the board's position authority and removing the statutory directive. As a result of this veto, the board retains the position authority for this 1.0 FTE GPR position for appointment as a deputy director.