

**STATEMENT ON COMPLETION OF JFC BUDGET WORK
JUNE 4, 2003**

Today the Joint Finance Committee will finish its work on the state budget earlier than any previous committee in the last 20 years. We pledged to put the interests of the taxpayers first, and this budget accomplishes that goal.

As Budget Director Reimer constantly reminded the members of this Committee, the Doyle administration had an abundance of challenges and a shortage of time with regard to preparing their budget. The members of the committee were understanding of those difficulties faced by the Governor. But the bill presented by Governor Doyle was not reflective of his budget speech back in February.

Governor Doyle told us this budget crisis would be over “without old tricks, and without new taxes”, while his 9.5% increase in property taxes, his raid of one-time money in the Patients Compensation Fund, and his HMO tax hike (that would have been paid for by health care consumers) told us it was business as usual.

Governor Doyle told us he was “expanding” aid to schools, but his budget reneged on the state’s commitment to funding two-thirds of school costs. Our budget restores \$135 million in additional school aids.

Governor Doyle told us we were “protecting” health care benefits, but his budget underfunded Medical Assistance and BadgerCare by over \$35 million. Our budget fills that hole to provide full funding for these critical programs.

The Governor’s speech was music to our ears, but his budget hit a sour note. I’m proud to say that the work of this Committee has finally put the budget in tune with Governor Doyle’s rhetoric.

Yet by no means does our amended version of this bill represent a perfect budget. For every program we helped, there’s another we wish we could have done more to assist.

But this budget is about priorities. And our priorities have always been:

- To balance the budget without raising taxes or shifting the burden to the local property tax
- To maintain Wisconsin's commitment to high quality public education
- To continue providing access to health care for our most vulnerable citizens
- To encourage job growth and economic development

We set out priorities and held true to them.

- This budget addresses a \$3.2 billion deficit without raising taxes.
- It freezes state government operations spending for three years
- It protects property taxpayers with freezes on state and local government spending
- It increases state aid to public schools and local governments, and protects funding for police, firefighting, and other public safety services
- It fully funds healthcare for the neediest citizens
- Where it was prudent and possible, we eliminated or reduced several of the fee increases proposed by the Governor
- We kept policy out of the budget and were beholden to no special interest other than our citizens

This has been a difficult process and probably the biggest challenge any of us as legislators and members of this committee have ever faced. We all understood the task before us. We committee members, the state agencies, the advocates and the general public have all been willing to make the necessary sacrifices to balance this budget.

I believe the decisions we made and the priorities we set will serve the taxpayers well, maintain services for the neediest of the needy, and assist in putting Wisconsin on the road to economic recovery.

There are many people to thank, but never does a group of people deserve more praise than Director Lang and his tremendous staff at the Legislative Fiscal Bureau. Their expertise and dedication, their patience and their long hours serve the State of Wisconsin immeasurably.