



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## **CHANGE TO EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS LAW COULD HELP CONTROL LOCAL COSTS, SAY GOTTLIEB, BROWN**

### **Local Elected Officials Welcome Proposed Changes**

(Madison, WI) – State Senator Ron Brown (R-Eau Claire) and Representative Mark Gottlieb (R-Port Washington) today released a package of proposed municipal employment relations reforms in a Capitol press conference. Surrounded by legislators and local officials, Brown (a former fire chief) and Gottlieb (a former mayor) outlined two bills that they have had drafted.

“During the discussion about the property tax freeze, legislators on both sides of that issue expressed concern about the burden that high property taxes put on Wisconsin homeowners,” said Brown.

“We believe that any long-term solution to this problem must include flexibility for our local officials so they can operate their communities cost-effectively,” Brown noted. “That’s why we have drafted legislation designed to increase local control and give officials the tools they need to control the cost of government,” he added.

Gottlieb stated that the proposal includes two bills encompassing six changes to current law relating to employment relations between local governments and their employees. “The purpose of the proposal is to encourage prompt and fair settlement of public employee contracts; to provide local governments with greater flexibility to work smarter and more efficiently; and to make the impact on property tax rates a factor in public employee bargaining,” Gottlieb said.

“We want to bring the interests of the property taxpayers to the bargaining table,” Gottlieb added.

Current law provides a complex and cumbersome set of rules for governments and their employees to negotiate contracts, and to resolve disputes through a process of binding arbitration. The proposal calls for several procedural changes to the bargaining and arbitration process. Specifically, it:

- Requires arbitrators to consider the impact of settlement proposals on the tax levy, with an effort to avoiding settlements that cannot be funded without raising the local property tax rate.

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- Eliminates the requirement that governments must negotiate the impact of privatization. This will give local communities the flexibility they need to obtain services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible.
- Requires arbitrators to compare the pay of employees with the pay of other workers (public and private sector) within their own community, and not with employees in other communities, as is the case under current law.
- Requires arbitrators to specify in writing the factors used in making an award.
- Restricts the awarding of back pay to disputes where the union's offer is accepted. This is an inducement to prompt settlement and the avoidance of lengthy and costly arbitration proceedings.
- Requires newly hired employees to pay the first 3 percent of the employee portion of their pension cost, as a non-bargainable contribution. This does not affect employees in the retirement system at the time of the enactment of the bill. For most employees, the employer will still be paying 70 to 80 percent of total pension contributions.

Brown and Gottlieb were joined by local elected officials from across the state, who welcomed the proposed changes. Sun Prairie mayor David Hanneman, who was unable to attend, sent a letter in support of the proposal stating, "this type of legislation will only help to reduce the burden to our citizens."

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**Local Elected Officials in attendance at the 10-07-03 Press Conference**

Mayor Ted Wysocki, New Berlin  
Mayor Mike Miller, West Bend  
Mayor Ray Glowacki, Cudahy  
Mayor Tim Seider, Greenfield  
Mayor Christine Nuernberg, Mequon  
Mayor Scott Huebner, Port Washington

Village President Ron Hayward, West Milwaukee

Tom Meaux, Ozaukee County Administrative Coordinator  
Gus "Sandy" Wirth, Ozaukee County County Board Chairman  
Adam Payne, Sheboygan County Administrative Coordinator  
Bill Goering, Sheboygan County Board Chairman