

A Yearly Recap

By: Rep. Glenn Grothman

HAPPY NEW YEAR – I thought I'd use the final column of the year to update you on various issues I've written about over the past year.

Overall it has been a good year in Madison in dealing with the cost of government. While several more years of tough budgets loom, the state passed this year's budget without any state tax increase and actually cut business taxes.

A larger impediment to Wisconsin's business growth was its regulatory climate. While Governor Doyle did veto bills designed to accelerate a permitting process, we finished the year agreeing with the Governor on a bill to be passed in January. This bill will accelerate permitting and restore some common sense in the ability of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to grant both air and water permits. I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the committee dealing with these regulatory reforms and it is the first successful effort since I have had this job in reining in the DNR.

The new state program to allow the government to provide free family planning services for fifteen-year-old girls without parental consent is almost a year old. Lon Newman of the Wisconsin Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association said at a press conference that he is aggressively recruiting for this program. I've introduced a bill to prevent this program from including minors and believe it will pass out of an Assembly committee in January.

Sadly, a questionable \$75 million giveaway for two Louisiana corporations (known as the WISCAP bill) passed the State Senate and was endorsed by Governor Doyle. Excellent articles in the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel have shown what a failure this program was in other states. I have confidence the Assembly leadership will have the courage and integrity to kill the bill.

Governor Doyle vetoed a bill allowing citizens to carry a concealed firearm if they complete a training course and have passed a background check. Since then a similar bill passed both houses of the Ohio Legislature. It is entirely possible that by this time next year the only states which don't allow conceal and carry will be Illinois and Wisconsin.

Government regulations allowing the Department of Transportation to prevent anyone from using the front fifty feet of their property on a state highway remain in effect. We have tried to negotiate some sort of compromise with the department but their attitude is that they will not abuse their power. A lawsuit has been filed since this would be an unconstitutional "taking" under the United States Constitution. This rule may have to be suspended in January.

The Legislature passed a bill clarifying that same sex (homosexual) marriages are not legal in the State of Wisconsin. Governor Doyle vetoed it. At the time the bill was passed there was a concern that someday another state would allow same sex marriage and then Wisconsin would have to recognize marriages from that state. Almost as soon as Governor Doyle vetoed the bill, a Massachusetts court ruled that Massachusetts must allow these marriages within a year. A constitutional amendment will be introduced in the spring.

So far none of Governor Doyle's vetoes have been overridden. Since constitutional amendments are voted on directly by the people, this is one way to circumvent Governor Doyle's veto pen. I think you can expect several other constitutional amendments to be introduced as well in the coming months.

Please let me know what you think on this issue. Contact me here in Madison--
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