



# STATE OF WISCONSIN Senate Journal

One-Hundred and Second Regular Session

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6:30 P.M.

TUESDAY, January 19, 2016

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The Senate met.

The Senate was called to order by Senate President Lazich.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (6), the Chief Clerk makes the following entries under the above date.

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## CHIEF CLERK'S ENTRIES

### AMENDMENTS OFFERED

Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to **Senate Bill 380** offered by Senator Harsdorf.

Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to **Senate Bill 409** offered by Senator Wanggaard.

Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Amendment 1 to **Senate Bill 434** offered by Senator Tiffany.

Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to **Senate Bill 458** offered by Senator Olsen.

Senate Amendment 1 to **Senate Bill 573** offered by Senator Kapenga.

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## INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, AND REFERENCE OF PROPOSALS

Read and referred:

### **Senate Joint Resolution 82**

Relating to: designating November as a month recognizing women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in Wisconsin.

By Senators Shilling, Harsdorf, C. Larson, Harris Dodd, Cowles, Hansen, Ringhand, Vinehout, Wirch, Darling and Bewley; cosponsored by Representatives Johnson, Kerkman, Kolste, Sargent, Billings, Ballweg, Milroy, Czaja, Mason, Kleefisch, Hesselbein, Rohrkaste, Danou, Loudenbeck, Barnes, Duchow, Goyke, Allen, C. Taylor, Young, Subeck, Sinicki, Quinn, Zepnick, Neylon, Bernier, Zamarripa, Hebl, Petryk, Ohnstad, Stuck, Brostoff, Considine, Berceau, Knodl, Kahl, VanderMeer, Pope, Tranel and Spreitzer.

To committee on **Senate Organization**.

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## REPORT OF COMMITTEES

The committee on **Government Operations and Consumer Protection** reports and recommends:

### **Senate Bill 407**

Relating to: biennial budget requests of state agencies.

Passage.

Ayes: 3 - Senators Stroebel, LeMahieu and Kapenga.

Noes: 2 - Senators Harris Dodd and Wirch.

### *DUEY STROEBEL*

Chairperson

Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection

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The committee on **Natural Resources and Energy** reports and recommends:

### **Senate Bill 539**

Relating to: authorizing the Wisconsin Propane Education and Research Council to levy an assessment.

Passage.

Ayes: 5 - Senators Cowles, Lasee, Olsen, Miller and Wirch.

Noes: 0.

### **Senate Bill 545**

Relating to: action required to be taken in response to a discharge of hazardous substances, exemption from liability for certain hazardous substance discharges, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, and granting rule-making authority.

Passage.

Ayes: 5 - Senators Cowles, Lasee, Olsen, Miller and Wirch.

Noes: 0.

### **Senate Bill 548**

Relating to: the Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission for the Illinois Fox River basin.

Passage.

Ayes: 5 - Senators Cowles, Lasee, Olsen, Miller and Wirch.

Noes: 0.

### *ROBERT COWLES*

Chairperson

Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

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The committee on **Senate Organization** reports:

Referred to, and withdrawn from, the Joint Committee on Finance, pursuant to Senate Rule 41 (1)(e):

**Senate Bill 243**  
**Senate Bill 440**

Ayes: 3 - Senators S. Fitzgerald, Lazich and Vukmir.  
Noes: 2 – Senators Shilling and Hansen.

Public hearing requirement waived, pursuant to Senate Rule 18 (1m):

**Assembly Bill 142**  
**Assembly Bill 212**  
**Assembly Bill 223**  
**Assembly Bill 310**  
**Assembly Bill 319**  
**Assembly Bill 364**  
**Assembly Bill 365**  
**Assembly Bill 366**  
**Assembly Bill 367**  
**Assembly Bill 373**  
**Assembly Bill 424**  
**Assembly Bill 426**  
**Assembly Bill 439**  
**Assembly Bill 451**  
**Assembly Bill 453**  
**Assembly Bill 454**  
**Assembly Bill 478**  
**Assembly Bill 574**

Ayes: 3 - Senators S. Fitzgerald, Lazich and Vukmir.  
Noes: 2 – Senators Shilling and Hansen.

Placed the following appointments and proposals on the Senate Calendar of Wednesday, January 20, 2016:

**Bruce Berth**  
**Tracey Isensee**  
**Senate Joint Resolution 76**  
**Senate Joint Resolution 77**  
**Senate Joint Resolution 80**  
**Senate Joint Resolution 81**  
**Senate Joint Resolution 82**  
**Assembly Joint Resolution 5**  
**Assembly Joint Resolution 15**  
**Senate Bill 147**  
**Senate Bill 238**  
**Senate Bill 243**  
**Senate Bill 248**  
**Senate Bill 274**  
**Senate Bill 285**  
**Senate Bill 313**  
**Senate Bill 315**  
**Senate Bill 351**  
**Senate Bill 381**  
**Senate Bill 382**  
**Senate Bill 390**  
**Senate Bill 391**  
**Senate Bill 406**  
**Senate Bill 408**  
**Senate Bill 435**

**Senate Bill 436**  
**Senate Bill 438**  
**Senate Bill 440**  
**Senate Bill 448**  
**Senate Bill 455**  
**Senate Bill 463**  
**Senate Bill 478**  
**Senate Bill 512**  
**Senate Bill 513**  
**Senate Bill 514**  
**Senate Bill 545**  
**Senate Bill 548**  
**Senate Bill 549**  
**Assembly Bill 13**  
**Assembly Bill 142**  
**Assembly Bill 223**  
**Assembly Bill 291**  
**Assembly Bill 310**  
**Assembly Bill 319**  
**Assembly Bill 362**  
**Assembly Bill 364**  
**Assembly Bill 365**  
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**Assembly Bill 367**  
**Assembly Bill 373**  
**Assembly Bill 424**  
**Assembly Bill 426**  
**Assembly Bill 439**  
**Assembly Bill 451**  
**Assembly Bill 453**  
**Assembly Bill 454**  
**Assembly Bill 478**  
**Assembly Bill 574**

Ayes: 3 - Senators S. Fitzgerald, Lazich and Vukmir.  
Noes: 2 – Senators Shilling and Hansen.

*SCOTT FITZGERALD*  
Chairperson  
Committee on Senate Organization

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The committee on **Universities and Technical Colleges** reports and recommends:

**WILLIAMS, REPRESENTATIVE MARY**, of Madison, as a Public Member on the Wisconsin Technical College System Board, to serve for the term ending May 1, 2021.

Confirmation.

Ayes: 5 - Senators Harsdorf, Nass, Gudex, Hansen and Bewley.  
Noes: 0.

**Senate Bill 511**

Relating to: creating a Distance Learning Authorization Board and making an appropriation.

Senate Amendment 1 adoption.

Ayes: 5 - Senators Harsdorf, Nass, Gudex, Hansen and Bewley.  
Noes: 0.

Passage as amended.

Ayes: 3 - Senators Harsdorf, Gudex and Bewley.

Noes: 2 - Senators Nass and Hansen.

*SHEILA HARSDORF*

Chairperson

Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

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## PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (5), Senator Larson withdrawn as a co-author of **Senate Bill 550**.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (5), Representative Murphy added as a co-sponsor of **Senate Bill 578**.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (5), Representative Murphy withdrawn as a co-sponsor of **Senate Bill 516**.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (5), Representative Nygren added as a co-sponsor of **Senate Joint Resolution 81**.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 17 (5), Senator Stroebel added as a co-author of **Senate Bill 543**.

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### State of Wisconsin Office of the Senate President

January 19, 2016

The Honorable, the Senate:

Pursuant to Senate Rule 46 (2)(c), I am writing to inform you that I have directed the following proposals to be withdrawn from committee and rereferred. I have obtained the consent of the appropriate standing committee chairperson and the chairperson of the committee on Senate Organization.

**Assembly Bill 310**, relating to: family planning and preventive health services grants and granting rule-making authority., withdrawn from Committee on **Health and Human Services** and rereferred to Committee on **Senate Organization**.

**Assembly Bill 426**, relating to: transport of radiological materials and providing penalties., withdrawn from Committee on **Transportation and Veterans Affairs** and rereferred to Committee on **Senate Organization**.

Sincerely,

*MARY LAZICH*

Senate President

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## REFERRALS AND RECEIPT OF COMMITTEE REPORTS CONCERNING PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

The joint committee for review of **Administrative Rules** reports and recommends:

**Senate Clearinghouse Rule 15-040**

Relating to the requirements for entrance to examinations.

No action taken on January 19, 2016.

*STEPHEN NASS*

Senate Chairperson

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## MESSAGES FROM THE ASSEMBLY

By Patrick E. Fuller, chief clerk.

Mr. President:

I am directed to inform you that the Assembly has adopted and asks concurrence in:

**Assembly Joint Resolution 95**

**Assembly Joint Resolution 96**

**Assembly Joint Resolution 99**

Passed and asks concurrence in:

**Assembly Bill 53**

**Assembly Bill 218**

**Assembly Bill 351**

**Assembly Bill 440**

**Assembly Bill 478**

**Assembly Bill 560**

**Assembly Bill 574**

**Assembly Bill 580**

**Assembly Bill 612**

**Assembly Bill 667**

**Assembly Bill 676**

**Assembly Bill 677**

**Assembly Bill 678**

**Assembly Bill 679**

**Assembly Bill 680**

**Assembly Bill 681**

**Assembly Bill 682**

**Assembly Bill 683**

**Assembly Bill 684**

**Assembly Bill 685**

**Assembly Bill 686**

**Assembly Bill 687**

**Assembly Bill 688**

**Assembly Bill 689**

**Assembly Bill 690**

Concurred in:

**Senate Bill 104**

**Senate Bill 253**

**Senate Bill 304**

**Senate Bill 308**

**Senate Bill 309**

**Senate Bill 386**

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## MESSAGES FROM THE ASSEMBLY CONSIDERED

**Assembly Bill 478**

Relating to: disclosure of pupil records that are pertinent to addressing a pupil's educational needs to the Department of Children and Families, a county department of human services or social services, or a tribal organization that is legally responsible for the care and protection of the pupil.

By Representatives Ballweg, Genrich, Horlacher, Hutton, Johnson, Kitchens, Knodl, Murphy, A. Ott, Rodriguez, Steffen and Subeck; cosponsored by Senators Darling, Wanggaard, Bewley, Gudex, Harsdorf, C. Larson, Lassa, Olsen, Petrowski and L. Taylor.

Read first time and referred to committee on **Senate Organization**

#### **Assembly Bill 574**

Relating to: the disclosure of electronic juvenile court records to a county department of human services or social services for purposes of providing intake and depositions services.

By Representatives Hutton, Jarchow, Ballweg, Brandtjen, E. Brooks, Horlacher, Jacque, Kremer, Murphy, Quinn, Rohrkaste, Subeck and Tittl; cosponsored by Senators Darling and Bewley.

Read first time and referred to committee on **Senate Organization**

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President Lazich appointed Senator Roth and Senator Lassa to escort his Excellency, the Governor, to the Joint Convention.

Senator Fitzgerald, with unanimous consent, asked that the Senate stand adjourned until Wednesday, January 20, 2016, upon the rising of the Joint Convention.

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The Senate proceeded in a body to the Assembly Chamber to meet in Joint Convention to receive the State of the State Message.

6:32 P.M.

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### **IN ASSEMBLY CHAMBER IN JOINT CONVENTION**

7:00 P.M.

Senate President Lazich in the chair.

The Committee to wait upon the Governor appeared with his Excellency, the Honorable Governor Scott Walker, who delivered his message as follows:

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### **STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**

“Speaker Vos, Speaker Pro Temp August, President Ellis, Majority Leader Fitzgerald, Minority Leader Larson, Minority Leader Barca, members of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Constitutional Officers, tribal leaders, members of the Cabinet, distinguished guests, members of the Legislature, most importantly, fellow citizens of the great state of Wisconsin, it is an honor to appear before you tonight.

The state of our state is strong. We are moving Wisconsin forward.

Think about these simple facts:

There are more people working in Wisconsin than at nearly any other point in our history; state finances are stable; our school students are doing well overall; college tuition is frozen; and property and income taxes are down from 2010.

The Wisconsin Comeback is real.

When I was running for re-election just over a year ago, I said we would ensure everyone who wanted a job could find a job. So, what kind of progress have we made in the past year?

Well, the most recent unemployment rate in our state is the lowest it has been since March of 2001. Let's put that into perspective: my son, Alex, is a junior at the University of Wisconsin and my son, Matt, is a senior at Marquette University. The last time the unemployment rate was this low, they were 5 and 6 years old.

Late last year, we saw the largest monthly jobs gain since April of 1992. That's nearly 24 years ago, back before Tonette and I even went on our first date.

The percentage of people working in Wisconsin, the Labor Force Participation Rate, is 67.8 percent. This is 5.3 points better than the national rate and puts us in the top ten states in America.

According to the federal government's current employment statistics and local area unemployment statistics, more people were working in Wisconsin in 2015 than at any time in the past 20 years.

That's right. While so many in the media seem to obsess with negative stories, these facts from the federal Department of Labor show more people were working during this past year than at any time in the past two decades.

Last year, initial weekly unemployment claims averaged the lowest level since 1989. The facts show that fewer people are filing for unemployment and more people are working.

People like Sam Critzer of Madison who was hired as a Certified Nursing Assistant at St. Mary's and Brian Schuster from Lodi who got a job working as an Architectural Designer at Sullivan Design Build.

Not only are more people working, new business formations were up 3.6 percent last year. The economic impact of tourism increased 5.5 percent.

To continue this kind of growth in jobs and commerce, employers want stability. That's why we work so hard to get our fiscal house in order. It also ensures that the government will not be a burden on future generations.

I am proud that Wisconsin finished the fiscal year with a \$135.6 million budget surplus.

The state's rainy day fund is the largest in our history—165 times bigger than when we first took office.

Wisconsin is one of only two states with a fully funded pension system. While our neighbors to the south have a pension that is not even half funded, we are covered. This

fact provides peace of mind to our retirees and gives businesses part of the certainty they need to hire people in Wisconsin.

Our per capita debt—which includes pension and long-term health obligations—is among the lowest. That means we are one of the top ten best states in the country.

Bonding levels in the current state budget are the lowest in 20 years.

And we continue to weed out waste, fraud, and abuse to make government more effective, more efficient, and more accountable to you—the hard-working taxpayers.

In 2012, I launched the Lean Government Initiative. Here's one example: this past year, the Department of Safety and Professional Services used lean to save nearly \$38,000 annually by switching to electronic documents for some of its panels. Thankfully, our employees realize that every dollar counts.

To put this in perspective, the money saved from this reform is enough to pay for 43 students to go through a youth apprenticeship. Tonight, Janie Brischke, a state employee who was the sponsor of that lean project, is here with us. Thank you, Janie.

Let me repeat, our goal is to ensure that everyone who wants a job can find a job. One of the best ways to get people the skills they need to succeed is through a great education. Thankfully, we have some of the best schools in the country here in Wisconsin.

The graduating class of 2015 had the 2nd highest ACT scores in the country. And thanks to our efforts to prepare all students for college and career, the class of 2016 will be the first to be given the opportunity to take the ACT free of charge; helping overcome financial barriers and close achievement gaps.

In our state, 4th and 8th grade reading scores went up again in 2015.

According to the most recent report, Wisconsin's high school graduation rates are also up again—to third best in the country. Here with us tonight are students from Kewaunee and Fennimore high schools. In the most recent report, these two high schools graduated 100 percent of their senior classes.

Let's give a big round of applause to them and to their teachers and parents—and to all the others like them across Wisconsin. Thank you!

And speaking of students, we helped make college more affordable at our University of Wisconsin campuses as we froze tuition—for the first time ever—four years in a row. As a parent of two sons in college, I know how important it is to keep costs down for students and for the families who support them.

During the ten years before our freeze, the average annual increase in tuition within the University of Wisconsin System was over 8 percent. That was a 118 percent increase over a decade.

Compared to the previous trend, our tuition freeze saves the average student more than \$6,000 over four years. That's real money, and it helps make school more affordable to college students and working families.

With us tonight are a few UW students who have benefitted from our tuition freeze. Please welcome Erin Larson from Greenleaf, Michael Daniels from Appleton, and Sarah McQuade from Hartland.

We're also making it easier to get a great education at any of our excellent technical colleges within the state. Through our Blueprint for Prosperity initiative, we helped our technical colleges enroll another 5,000 students into high-demand career programs.

And we increased the number of youth apprenticeships and adult apprenticeships over the past four years. Our Youth Apprenticeships have more than doubled and our adult apprenticeships have increased by more than 30 percent.

You see, good-paying careers typically require more than a high school diploma. We need our young people to have as many excellent higher education options as possible to prepare for the workforce needs of the 21st century.

It also means changing our perspectives. We must value our students who choose to be highly skilled welders, IT technicians, or certified nursing assistants as much as we do those who choose to be doctors or lawyers. Each of these professions is vitally needed for a strong economy in Wisconsin.

Tonight, we are joined by Fox Valley Technical College students, Grant Richman from Madison, Sarah Dernlan from Appleton, Monica Stinski from Menasha, Emily Rohde from Neenah, and their instructor, Elizabeth Rath. They are all finishing their training as CNAs this week.

In addition, we are helping working families, senior citizens, small business owners, and family farmers afford to live, work, play, and retire here in Wisconsin. Tonight, I am proud to say that property and income taxes are down from where they were when we took office.

We didn't just slow the rate of increase; we actually reduced the tax burden from where it was five years ago.

Tonette and I used to grumble when our property tax bill showed up each December. In fact, we often let it sit for a few days before we opened it up because we were afraid to see the increase. Now, it is great to hear the stories of so many people who have a sigh of relief when they open their bills.

Property taxes on a median-valued home in Wisconsin were \$116 lower this past year than they were in 2010. Over the past five years, that homeowner saved \$1,227 from where property taxes were headed versus how they've gone down under our reforms collectively between 2010 and 2015.

And it's not just property tax relief—we've cut income taxes, too. A median income family will see a four-year income tax reduction of \$916. That's real money for hard-working taxpayers all across Wisconsin.

We also helped farmers and manufacturers in our state with a production tax credit that is phased in through this year. This helps some of our most important industries.

And we helped lower the tax burden on small businesses. Our reforms help them invest more into their companies and to expand their workforces.

One of the common things I hear from employers all across the state is that they have job openings, but that they cannot find qualified workers to fill these positions. That's why we've invested millions more into worker training programs. Still, we need more people in the workforce. We cannot afford to have anyone on the sidelines.

I am so proud that we helped transfer 8,334 people from government dependence to true independence. You see, the State of Wisconsin now requires able-bodied adults without children in the home to be enrolled in a job training program before they can get food stamps. We believe in helping people get the training necessary to find rewarding careers.

That's good for the taxpayers as it reduces the number of people on government programs. It's good for employers as many are looking for skilled workers. Best of all, it is good for each and every individual who now is able to find employment and control his or her own destiny.

People like Jessica who enrolled in our program last June. In August, she got a job in housekeeping at a local hotel. She now works full-time at a wood flooring mill. Along the way, she also received help to finish her studies at Northcentral Technical College to be a certified nursing assistant. She took her final exam for certification on January 8th. Congratulations, Jessica!

In the spring of 2015, Rebecca joined our program. Through job classes, she worked on interview skills and made a resume. Rebecca searched for work and successfully gained employment at Wal-Mart in the deli department. Rebecca has been employed now for more than five months and is grateful for the experience she received with our program.

Thomas sought our help last June. Within a month, he got a job. In December, he was hired by Harley-Davidson as a full-time warehouse employee.

For too long, government programs have entrapped individuals like this into extended dependency. Our reforms help people get the training they need to get back up on their own feet.

When we first proposed these reforms, some in this Capitol argued that we were making it harder to get government assistance. The truth is: we're making it easier to find a job.

You see, true freedom and prosperity do not come from the mighty hand of the government. They come from empowering people to live their own lives through the dignity that comes from work.

When I was a kid, my first job was washing dishes at the Countryside Restaurant. Later in high school, I flipped hamburgers at McDonald's in my hometown of Delavan.

These jobs taught me the importance of hard work. Tonette and I made sure our sons worked similar jobs at a pizza place and a custard stand. Traveling the state, I've heard many people tell me stories of their first jobs. It is in our nature as humans to want to be productive and contribute to our families and to our communities.

Think about it. No one signs a high school year book saying, "good luck becoming dependent on the government." Instead, we aspire to be able to support ourselves and our families and to provide a good life for future generations.

That's why our focus in state government is simple: everyone who wants a job can find a job. Helping people identify a meaningful career is worth far more than a paycheck. It's really about helping people achieve true independence. It's about living the American Dream.

In 2016, we want to help more people live that dream here in Wisconsin.

As mentioned, people across this state constantly tell me about job openings in their areas. To fill these positions, we need to work with students at a younger age to get them ready for the many exciting careers available in our state.

In the fall, 25 school districts will be part of an Academic and Career Plans pilot. We provided funding, so every child in the state between grades 6 and 12 can have access to a plan beginning in the 2017 school year. This will prepare students to think about their interests so they can take courses in junior high and high school that will prepare them for their future occupations.

We have some of the best schools in the country, but we need to do more for our students to succeed in the 21st century. In the past, we enacted major reforms that helped schools reward great teachers, improve curriculum, and balance budgets.

Now, we need to do more to reform state government and put those savings into public education. One area to consider for real reform is the way we administer health insurance for state employees, which some experts believe could save tens of millions of dollars.

Tonight, I commit to investing every penny of savings to the general fund from these specific reforms to support public education. People tell me that they appreciate our efforts to get the state's fiscal house in order and that now is the time to use savings to help our students prepare for the future.

Even before the next budget, we want to put more resources into public education. Tonight, I am pleased to announce we will provide an additional \$3 million for dual enrollment programs in our schools through the Wisconsin Fast Forward program. These grants will help districts to partner with local technical colleges, so our students can get a jump-start on their career plans.

We are also excited to work with the University of Wisconsin System to explore providing a three-year degree that would start in our high schools and continue on many of our UW campuses. This would help reduce costs and move people into the workforce sooner.

As we mentioned this past week, student loan debt has increasingly become a burden for young professionals. The best way to tackle this issue is to keep the costs down in the first place. That is why we worked together to freeze tuition for four years.

Still, there are many young people who took out loans before our freeze or did so at private institutions. So we have a package of ideas to help offset the price of college and reduce the costs of student loan debt. We believe that these measures can garner bipartisan support in this legislative session.

Thank you to Representative Dave Murphy, as well as Senator Howard Marklein, Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Representative John Macco, and Representative Dave Heaton, for working with us to put together these plans:

First, we will allow for the full deduction of student loan interest on state income taxes.

Second, we will increase Wisconsin grants for technical colleges to help another 1,000 students, which is on top of the more than 5,000 students we added under our Blueprint for Prosperity.

Third, we'll expand the emergency grants program for students at technical colleges and two-year UW Colleges.

Fourth, we'll increase internships within the UW System to help prepare students for future careers.

Fifth, we look to expand transparency by sending information to students each year about their current and projected student loan debt levels and education costs.

Tonight, I call on lawmakers in both parties to pass this legislative package as soon as possible to help lower the cost of higher education and to ease the burden of student loan debt.

In addition, I look forward to working with UW System President Ray Cross and Board of Regents President Regina Millner and Vice President John Behling to strengthen and promote programs to allow students to graduate on time, to explore a three-year degree, and to expand the UW Flex Option to a number of students equal to a new UW campus. We want a quality education to be affordable in Wisconsin for college students and their families.

You see, we now compete in a global economy. Education will drive success, as will technology. That is why I am glad that we tripled the amount of funding in our budget dedicated this year for broadband access across the state.

People can do business anywhere in the world, but they need access to high-speed internet connections. Our program partners with local investments to install a fiber network. Once completed, a private company provides the service.

Without our assistance, rural areas would be deprived of quality internet access because private companies could not justify the rate of return on investment. Our program helps small businesses, family farmers, tourism attractions, and public schools across the state.

While these investments are great, investing in our people is even more important. Today, we are assisting people with disabilities prepare to enter the workforce by helping employers understand their unique abilities.

In 2015, the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assisted nearly 5,000 people with disabilities reach their employment goal. This was the highest rate in 15 years.

We are also helping people with disabilities in high school get ready for careers through something called Project SEARCH. Here in Wisconsin, the program has a success rate of 85 percent—higher than the national rate.

Last year, we grew Project SEARCH to 16 total employer sites. Tonight, I am pleased to note that our funding will help add three more employer sites in 2016.

Helping to keep valuable employees in the workforce is also important. For example, many don't know that the majority of caregivers for people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease are employed beyond their roles as caregivers.

With this in mind, we have a new kit for employers to use to help their valued employees who are caring for a loved one. Tonight, I invite you to get more information about this at [dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia).

The idea for the kit came from former Wisconsin Governor Marty Schreiber whose wife, Elaine, has Alzheimer's disease. He worked with my Secretary of Health Services, Kitty Rhoades, on the project. Governor Schreiber is traveling tonight, but we're grateful to him and to Secretary Rhoades for their hard work on this issue.

Helping people deal with their health care needs—including mental health—is another way to retain top talent in the workplace. We need to break the stigma and assist people to get the help that they need. I am proud that we put more resources into mental health services than any Wisconsin Governor in the past 25 years.

In 2013, I pronounced that no man or woman who served our country in the Armed Forces should return home and not be able to find employment.

Here in Wisconsin, I am proud to say that we lowered the unemployment rate for veterans in 2014, and again, in 2015. Our state now has one of the lowest unemployment rates for veterans in the nation, significantly below the national unemployment rate for veterans.

Our goal is to see it drop again this year. We owe it to our returning heroes.

All of these different initiatives are designed to increase independence while helping people get the education and skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

As I said at the onset of this address, the state of our state is strong.

There are more people working in Wisconsin than at nearly any other point in our history; state finances are stable; overall, our school students are doing well; college tuition is frozen; and property and income taxes are down from where they were before I took office.

Looking ahead, we have an aggressive plan over the next year to ensure that everyone who wants a job can find a job. We will enact this plan by helping the people of this state improve the economy and by investing in K-12 education, higher education, and worker training.

Still, we need to do more. We need to prepare for the future.

As we think about the next 20 years, I want to hear from you about your hopes and dreams—for your families, your communities, and your state.

With this in mind, I am proud to announce that we are going to visit every part of the state to hold listening sessions throughout 2016. So far, we have held sessions in Seymour, Prairie du Chien, Milwaukee, Osseo, Kewaunee, Sturgeon Bay, and Ashwaubenon... and we plan on coming to a community near you soon.

So far, participants have included principals, farmers, small business owners, local government officials, retirees, veterans, teachers, construction workers, union members, parents, high school students, nurses, charitable organization leaders, superintendents, insurance agents, ministers, college students, machinists, law enforcement, and a librarian.

This is personal for me, as I think the best way to plan for the future is to hear from people all over the state. We need

a shared vision for the future. This is why I want to hear from you.

I call it our 2020 Vision Project. The idea is to bring together a diverse mix of people in small group settings all across the state. I want to hear from you about what makes Wisconsin great, where we want our state to be in the next two decades, and how we should measure success.

Now, more than ever, it is important to consider the kind of state our children and grandchildren will inherit. We need to think more about the next generation than just about the next election.

The founders of our state and our country had that kind of long view of the world. Their founding principles were able to overcome partisan and political differences. We can do the same as we think about the kind of state we want to become over the next 20 years and beyond.

On July 4th, we will observe the 240th birthday of this great country—a nation built on the principle of freedom. As we celebrate, let us remember that our rights are endowed by our Creator, defined by our Constitution, but defended each and every day by the men and women who wear the uniform.

They and their families deserve our praise—and more importantly—our prayers. May God bless each and every one of them. May God bless the great State of Wisconsin. And may God bless the United States of America.”

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## ADJOURNMENT

The Joint Convention arose.

7:54 P.M.