
AMY BINSFELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 27TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

Representative Amy Binsfeld

August 30, 2023

Chair Macco and Members of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on AJR 66, a constitutional amendment that would require a supermajority vote in each house of the legislature for passage of tax increases.

Tax increases should be an option of last resort. When families struggle to make ends meet, they don't have the option to simply increase revenues. They make the tough choices to balance their budget. Maybe they put off buying a new car for a year, eat out less, get rid of that streaming service or buy cheaper groceries. They set their priorities and live within their means. Why is it so much to ask for the state government to do the same?

This common sense constitutional amendment would require a 2/3rds vote to increase sales, income or franchise taxes. The current statutory limitation can easily be disregarded through a simple majority vote in the legislature. If we are ever faced with a situation in which tax increases are the only option, that decision should be made with input from both parties and ideologies, working together. It's not impossible. Milwaukee and Milwaukee County both met this requirement when faced with their economic crisis.

Since 2011, Legislative Republicans have worked to reduce taxes by over \$22 billion, and reduced income and franchise taxes by over \$13 billion, which has led to economic prosperity and record budget surpluses. The legislature should take the necessary steps to make sure it is extremely difficult to reverse those actions.

Sixteen states currently have a supermajority requirement to increase taxes with at least 7 placing that requirement in their constitution. And this isn't a conservative idea. States from both sides of the political spectrum have adopted this pro-taxpayer provision into their constitution.

In the end, the people of Wisconsin will make the decision on whether to make it harder to increase their taxes. We just need to have the strength to let them make that choice.

Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today and I am open to answer any questions you may have.



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

DAN KNODL

STATE SENATOR • 8TH DISTRICT

Assembly Joint Resolution 66

Public Testimony

Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

August 30, 2023

Thank you Chairman Macco and members of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means for holding a public hearing on Assembly Joint Resolution 66.

This legislature has spent over a decade cutting taxes, and yet our revenues continue to grow. Our improving tax climate demonstrates that economic growth is the key to growing our revenues, not raising taxes and driving investment toward other states.

Allow me to voice my strong support for this proposed amendment to the state constitution to require a two-thirds supermajority in the state legislature for any increase to the income or sales/use tax. This amendment represents a crucial step toward ensuring continued responsible fiscal policy, safeguarding taxpayer interests, and promoting economic stability in Wisconsin.

We ought to set a high threshold for any decision that raises taxes on our hardworking citizens and businesses. A higher threshold for enacting tax increases promotes bipartisan consensus-building and prevents hasty decisions that could burden our taxpayers. The result will be more thoughtful and well-informed decisions that are considerate of both the government's financial needs and the public's economic wellbeing.

Moreover, this amendment will provide a necessary safeguard against potential unchecked tax hikes, thereby fostering an environment of fiscal responsibility. It would prevent rash decisions driven by short-term financial pressures and instead compel legislators to evaluate the long-term consequences of their actions on our state's economy and citizens.

This is not a radical or new concept. It has been implemented elsewhere, including states as blue as California and as red as Louisiana. I urge this committee to support this proposed constitutional amendment. Thank you for your time and consideration.



KAREN HURD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 68TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Joint Resolution 66
Public Testimony
Ways and Means Committee
August 30, 2023

Thank you, Chair Macco, Vice-chair Brooks and members of the committee for holding this hearing on Assembly Joint Resolution 66.

It is the legislature's responsibility to advocate for the citizens of Wisconsin. This includes being forward thinking. One of the most important aspects of life of a Wisconsin citizen, if not the most important, is their economic stability. As government grows in power and in size which can happen all too easily and is most difficult to reverse, it would seem to be a logical step to increase taxes on the citizenry in order to support the programs that the government deems are necessary. Of course, the legislature would have what they feel is adequate justification for the needed revenues to cover the projected spending.

However, mankind is fallible. This is the reason why there is wisdom in many counselors. That is why we have a state assembly comprised of 99 people. We need this many to examine issues from every perspective and angle, and most especially from the perspective of our constituents. Robust debate, detailed examination, and a deliberative process will help determine if the state budget really calls for an increase in revenue that would need to be provided by an income tax, sales tax, or franchise tax increase.

To aid in this deliberative process that must be undertaken with the utmost gravity and caution, the wisdom in requiring a two-thirds majority approval of any income, sales, or franchise tax increase is a guard against too hasty of decision-making and very importantly gives more of a voice to the minority. This is important as the pendulum swings from one party to the other as the years tick by. A requirement to have a two-thirds majority vote helps to protect against partisanship. Partisanship is not good for Wisconsin or any governmental body. It impedes working together for the best solutions for our state.

Assembly Joint Resolution 66 is an excellent measure that should be implemented to ensure the best outcome for the economic interests of Wisconsin citizens.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.