



ROBERT WITTKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 62nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Transportation
January 9, 2024

Chair Vander Meer and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Assembly Bill 603 and its substitute amendment. Assembly Bill 603 was drafted at the request of The Prairie School located in Wind Point, where I reside. It is a private, independent, college preparatory day school serving early school/pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 founded in 1965. Notable individuals have attended and matriculated The Prairie School including the Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer.

The design of The Prairie School is Frank Lloyd Wright architecturally-styled and the school is part of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail.

For all its time in Racine, The Prairie School has been without directional signage from I-94. I believe it is time to make a change.

You all should have received my email regarding a substitute amendment to Assembly Bill 603 that would add to the same sign, beneath The Prairie School, another historic site just around the corner from the school. The Wind Point Lighthouse, also located in the Village of Wind Point on the shores of Lake Michigan, stands 108 feet tall and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1880 and was lit for the first time on November 15, 1880 and continues to be lit to this day. Like The Prairie School, Wind Point Lighthouse has no directional signage from I-94.

Assembly Substitute Amendment 1 to Assembly Bill 603 will include both historic locations on one sign in two directions from I-94 at County Highway K in Racine County. Travelers will be made aware of the opportunity to visit these historic locations and enjoy more of beautiful Wind Point on the shores of Lake Michigan.

This is an important change for these valuable historic Wisconsin resources. Residents and visitors will appreciate the directional signs.

Thank you for holding this public hearing. I hope you will support Assembly Bill 603 as amended.



THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL

1/09/2024

Support Assembly Bill 603

Dear Chairperson VanderMeer &
Wisconsin Assembly Committee on
Transportation Members,

When *Around The Corner with John McGivern* visited Caledonia and Wind Point they focused on four things, three in Wind Point: the lighthouse, The Prairie School, and world-renowned artist Bill Reid, who is the school's full-time Artist in Residence. A sign on I-94 would provide an important service for the thousands of visitors who come to the school each month, and it would recognize a nationally-acclaimed model of academic excellence.

Please consider that:

Prairie was founded in 1965 as an independent 501(c)3 not-for-profit school that receives no federal, state, or local funds. More than 50% of the students receive need-based financial aid and 100% of its graduates attend 4-year colleges, earning more than \$10,000,000 in scholarships in 2023.

Prairie has been ranked as the top school in Wisconsin and one of the top 50 day schools in the country according to Niche and the Malone Family Foundation. Prairie is one of only eight schools in the country that have been recognized by both the E.E. Ford Foundation and the Malone Family Foundation as exceptional models of K-12 excellence.

Prairie has 630 students from 486 families residing in 31 different zipcodes in southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The school also includes families from seven different countries.

Prairie is the largest employer in Wind Point and Caledonia, with more than 200 full and part-time employees.

The 47-acre campus includes 300,000 square feet of buildings designed by Tailisen Architects of Spring Green and Frank Loyd Wright fame. The school has had thousands of architectural visitors over the last decade.



THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL

The school's 330-seat Jack Mitchell Theater hosts hundreds of events each year featuring local, national, and international performers, including the Annual Wisconsin Jazz Day in partnership with the Milwaukee Jazz Institute, bringing hundreds of students from all over the state to campus.

The school hosts three annual college fairs for students from throughout the region and more than 100 colleges visited campus in 2023.

The Johnson Athletic Center is considered one of finest high school gymnasiums in the country and annually hosts the Illinois-Wisconsin Border Battle, featuring nine Wisconsin basketball teams playing nine Illinois teams for a traveling trophy.

The Ruud Family Soccer Complex has the only FIFA Level 2 field in the state and hosts USL, college, high school, and elite club soccer matches.

The campus is home to a world-renowned art collection including original Frank Lloyd Wright furniture and several pieces that traveled the globe as part of the Smithsonian's groundbreaking 1969 craft exhibit: [Objects USA](#).

The campus includes Racine's only remaining 19th century homestead which includes a barn built in 1862 and borders Lake Michigan.

Whether viewing Prairie through an economic, historical, or tourist/visitor lens, it's easy to see the school's significant impact on Southeastern Wisconsin and the surrounding region. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nat Coffman

Nathaniel W. Coffman, Ed.D.
President & Head of School

P.S. Please see attached photos.

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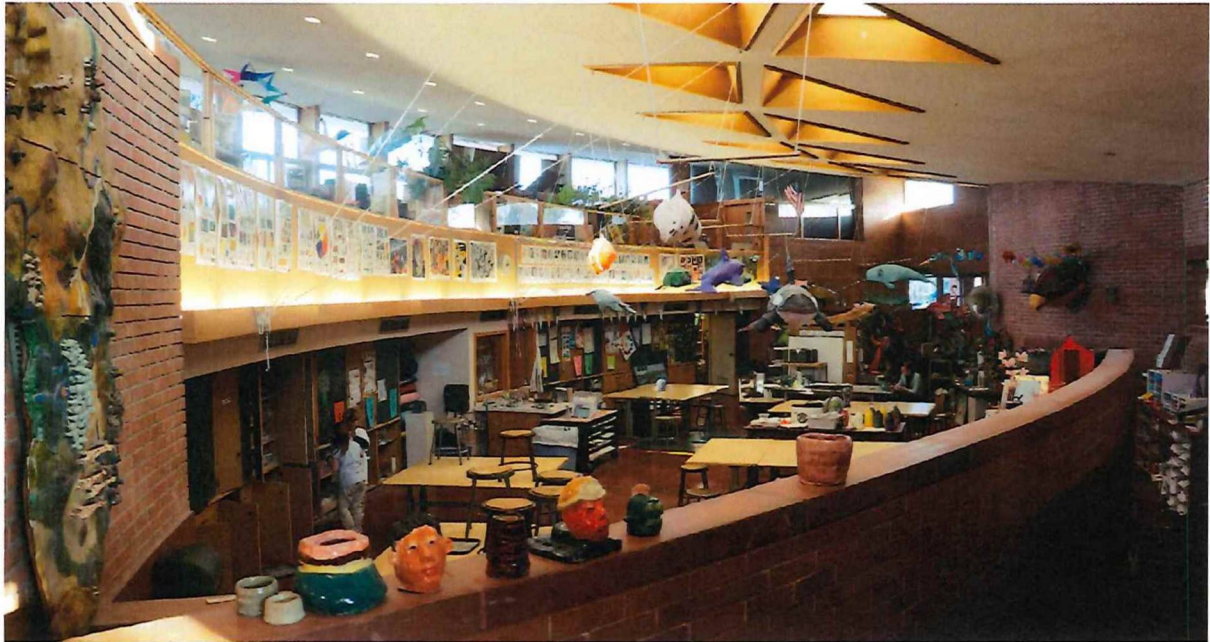


The Prairie School



Johnson Athletic Center

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL



Art Classroom and Bill Reid's Studio



Ruud Family Soccer Complex

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL



Main Entrance - timeless Taliesin Architecture