

Wisconsin Counties Association

MODERNIZING 911

Modernizing Wisconsin's 911 system has been a priority for local governments, Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), law enforcement and the telecommunications industry since the 2009-11 state biennial budget. A comprehensive 911 policy and funding reform package was sidetracked in 2009, with the 911 funding source originally intended for 911 modernization and PSAP upgrades renamed the Police and Fire Protection Fee (PFPF) and diverted the money to the shared revenue program. Since 2009, attempts to redirect the fee for overdue 911 upgrades and modernization have been unsuccessful.

The Joint Finance Committee adopted the budget motion that does the following:

- Creates a Director of Emergency Communications at DMA.
- Creates a new PR continuing appropriation in DMA's Emergency Management Services program for Interagency and Intra-agency assistance.
- Transfers functions of the Interoperability Council and WISCOM from DOJ to DMA.
- Provides \$464,000 GPR annually for software and IT equipment purchasing for WISCOM.
- Creates a 911 Subcommittee consisting of 19 members.
- Creates a new SEG appropriation to make and administer contracts to implement Next Generation 911. These funds will come from the Police and Fire Protection Fund.
- Utilization of the state's RFP process to secure a vendor to build a statewide digital network (ESINet).

TRANSPORTATION

State Prevailing Wage Requirements: The Governor's budget eliminates prevailing wage requirements for projects using state dollars. Projects using federal dollars are still applicable to federal Davis-Bacon wage requirement thresholds.

Transfers from the General Fund to the Transportation Fund: The Governor's budget transfers a one-time payment of \$24 million from the Petroleum Inspection Fund to the Transportation Fund in both fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The primary source of disagreement is on whether roads projects should be funded with bonding, new revenue or a combination of the two. Assembly Republicans don't want any new borrowing, and Senate Republicans don't support new revenue. Democrats, in the minority in both houses, have advocated in some cases for new revenue, likely in the form of a gas tax increase. Walker has pledged to veto any budget that raises the gas tax or vehicle registration fees. Joint Finance Committee will be taking up DOT on September 5th.

OPIOID ABUSE

The Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse recommends additional state resources for Children and Family Aids to help counties hire the social work staff they need to care for the additional victims of the opioid epidemic – children and family members.

December 2016 Magazine dedicated to opioid abuse/child welfare crisis

Counties Ready to Continue Fight for State's Most Vulnerable Citizens

As Wisconsin counties in every corner of the state are feeling the impact of increased heroin and opioid addiction, the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is commending Governor Scott Walker and the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse for the release of today's report and the announcement of a special session to combat the scourge of these drugs.

"The increased incidences of heroin and opioid use across the state are having a staggering effect on families. Counties are seeing its horrible impact on the street, in our jails, our courts and on our most vulnerable citizens – young children," said WCA Executive Director Mark D. O'Connell. "As an example, county human services departments across Wisconsin are seeing increased out-of-home placement costs as parents struggling with addiction are unable to safely care for their children. WCA has prioritized child welfare services over the past year and is appreciative today's report acknowledges this growing challenge."

Today's report includes many recommendations that will assist counties in fighting substance abuse. This includes addiction treatment, alternative, and diversion (TAD) funding, new dollars for innovative community coalitions, additional training dollars, and new data analytics to assist counties in targeting abuse prevention and treatment dollars.

"Our state is in the midst of a public health crisis and we look forward to working with Governor Walker, Lieutenant Governor Kleefisch, Representative Nygren and the entire Legislature in the upcoming special session to address this epidemic," said O'Connell. "Today's announcement and initiatives will go a long way in continuing this battle."

CHILD WELFARE

Background Information: State statute requires all counties, except Milwaukee County, to provide child welfare services and employ personnel who devote all or part of their time to child welfare services. Child welfare services include initial assessment of reports received, investigation, the provision of services to children and families, as well the removal of children from their homes to ensure their safety.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) distributes Children and Family Aids to counties for services related to child abuse and neglect and to unborn child abuse, including prevention, investigation, and treatment. Funding may also be used for community-based juvenile justice services. Base funding for the Children and Family Aids allocation is \$68,787,492.

States across the nation, including Wisconsin, are seeing an increase in the number of individuals using, and ultimately becoming addicted to, substances such as heroin, other opiates, and methamphetamines. The drug-addiction epidemic is increasing the need for child welfare services across Wisconsin.

The In-Home Safety Services (IHSS) program provides services to children and families while children are in the home to address safety issues and prevent the need for removal of children into out-of-home care placement.

The Joint Finance Committee approved the Governor's recommendation to increase the Children and Family Aids Allocation:

- \$1.25 million FED in FY18
- \$5 million FED FY19
- Represents a \$5 million calendar year increase beginning in 2018.
- Will need GPR next budget to maintain the new base funding level.

TAXATION AND FINANCE

Elimination of State Property Tax: The Governor's budget eliminates the state portion (forest mill tax) of the property tax beginning in 2017. JFC approved this repeal and is going to fund forestry programs with GPR.

Joint Agency: The Governor's budget provides counties and municipalities the authority to enter into contracts to establish joint agencies or commissions to carry out certain functions that will fulfill each of the participating local governments' obligation to establish such an agency or commission for that function.

https://www.wicounties.org/uploads/legislative_documents/joint-agency-statute-proposal.pdf