



A Template for Success

Finally, there is good news in our efforts to address what has been a chronic funding crisis in Wisconsin's criminal justice system.

Thanks to a concerted and coordinated effort these past several months, Governor Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Legislature heard your voices and acted. It is anticipated that by the time this article is published, the governor will have signed a state budget that will increase the pay rate, as well as make salary adjustments and pay progression, for assistant district attorneys and state public defenders; increase the private bar rate to \$100 per hour with an increase in travel reimbursement to \$50; and fund four additional circuit court branches and increase funding for critically needed cybersecurity initiatives for the courts. What is most noteworthy is that these initiatives passed with strong bipartisan support.

This is a significant step in advancing our legislative agenda and I am proud of the leadership role the State Bar of Wisconsin has played in advocating on these critical funding issues. Our success is an indication of what we can do when we work together and with partner organizations, agencies, and leaders. Thanks to countless grassroots efforts, including hundreds of members communicating with their legislators, we made our voices heard.

The coalition of state agencies across the justice system, including the Office of the State Public Defender, the Wisconsin District Attorneys Association, the Association of State Prosecutors, the Department of Justice, and the Director of State Courts, put forward a solid and reasonable proposal that the State Bar of Wisconsin fully supported, putting the coalition's advocacy muscle, along with the State Bar's, to work.

I'm personally grateful to the hundreds of volunteers and State Bar staff members who recognized the crisis and brought forward a message of bipartisan, serious concern to address the issue. Nearly every facet of your State Bar team played a role in ensuring the passage of this proposal.

The efforts of the last several months are a powerful reminder that collaboration, coupled with a clear message and focused effort, is an effective approach as we work to educate our elected leaders on issues of vital importance.

It's important to take a moment and celebrate, but we must continue to advocate for a fair and fully supported justice system for all in Wisconsin.

The State Bar will continue to be engaged and involved in finding and supporting bipartisan solutions that improve Wisconsin's justice system. Attracting and retaining the dedicated professionals who work every day to provide a fair and equitable legal system for all residents results in a better Wisconsin.

This fall, we will need your continued help and engagement as we advocate for expungement reform, addressing attorneys' student-loan debt, and the rural attorney shortage. We need to educate our lawmakers about these issues and how they affect the people of our great state.

We advanced the cause, but our work is not done. Keep those sleeves rolled up and let's continue to move forward together. **WL**

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

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