

To: County Board Committee Chairs and Staff, Executive Committee Members
From: Carrie Springer
Re: Legislative Agenda Updates

As you all know, the legislative agenda gets updated every session. As part of that review process I have highlighted sections of the 2019-2021 Legislative Agenda for the County Board to consider updating for the 2021-2023 Legislative Agenda. In the document called "DRAFT 1—DANE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2021-2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION—PROPOSED CHANGES" there are yellow highlighted sections that I recommend be deleted because those items were addressed by the legislature or they are duplicated in another area. The document also contains green highlighted sections that I recommend be reviewed and possibly updated by the standing committees of the County Board.

The County Board passed resolutions recently in support of smart justice reform and the Dane County Climate Action Plan so I recommend a complete update of the language for those sections.

What happens next?

- 1) - Please put the legislative agenda topic on the early December meeting agenda for your committee.
- 2) - Review the items in the agenda relevant to your committee and discuss the top three priority areas for review and consideration by the Executive Committee at its December 17th meeting.
- 3) - Committee chairs should provide comments in written form via email to your Exec Committee representative and copy Lisa MacKinnon and me on that email prior to December 17th so these suggestions can be reviewed and discussed by the Executive Committee at its Dec 17 meeting. The Executive Committee will work with you all to finalize a list of priorities and a resolution for referral to all committees and the board for action in January.

Agenda Priorities

At the November 19th meeting the Executive Committee decided the agenda should once again include a list of priorities for the session and each standing committee should consider what three items in their issue areas should be on the priority list. The 2019-2021 Legislative Agenda did not have a priority list, but the 2017-2019 Legislative Agenda did. I have included that list below just for informational purposes for your committee discussions.

Ten priorities from the 2017-2018 Agenda:

- Racial Equity
- Local Transportation

- District Attorney Funding
- Renewable Energy
- Water Quality
- Recycling
- Keeping 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system
- Homeless Services
- Public Assistance
- Local Government Control
- Rural Broadband

Committees might also take into consideration the issues likely to be discussed by the state legislature next session. The state budget covers many of the issues in the Dane County Legislative Agenda such as children and family aids, county transportation funding, shared revenue, housing and homeless services, mental health services, Medicaid expansion, and funding for district attorneys. Please let me know if you need more information on what topics are usually covered in the state budget. The list below contains topics that are likely to come up as stand alone legislation or packages outside of the budget process. There could be overlap in the issues covered by the budget and the ones considered as separate legislation.

- **Public Health** – Given public health’s role in managing the pandemic and the multitude of lawsuits filed around the state regarding the power of public health departments, it seems very likely that the legislature will address this topic when they come back into session. Numerous legislators have expressed the desire to curtail the powers of local health departments so I feel pretty confident this issue will come up with a lot of competing bills written on this topic. I recommend reviewing and updating this part of the agenda.
- **Voting Rights** – This issue comes up nearly every session, but it will receive even more attention this time now that some members of the Republican Party questioned mail-in and early in-person voting after the presidential election. Those asking for a recount in Dane and Milwaukee County repeatedly questioned the validity of these ballots despite the widespread use of mail-in and early in-person voting in every county of Wisconsin. This will most likely result in this issue getting even more attention this session and many bills on this topic. I recommend reviewing this section of the agenda.
- **Racial Equity** – The Assembly Speaker announced the Speaker’s Task Force on Racial Disparities this summer on the same day Governor Evers called a special session on policing reform and transparency. The governor put forth nine bills for the legislature to consider on topics such as banning chokeholds and no-knock warrants and requiring de-escalation training. The Assembly task force is currently meeting over the fall and winter with instructions to produce bills for the legislature to consider next session on racial disparities, educational opportunities, public safety, and police policies and standards.

- **Broadband Expansion** – The pandemic exposed many of the weaknesses in Wisconsin’s broadband coverage as many school districts were forced to go virtual regardless of whether or not every student had access to broadband. The health care industry leaned into telehealth appointments during the pandemic as well and is unlikely to undo that even when the pandemic is contained. There could be a push to at both the state and federal level to dramatically expand access to broadband.
- **Criminal Justice Reform and Juvenile Justice** – Both issues are likely to receive more attention this session due to national trends and budget pressures at all levels. The pandemic also provided a partial road map for reduced jail capacities. Some conservative groups briefly weighed in on this issue during the last session on the side of reduced jail capacities as well, which could help build a coalition to make some much-needed changes. The juvenile system will almost certainly be addressed as well since Dane and Milwaukee County did not go forward with the regional system originally proposed in Act 185.
- **Water Quality** – The abrupt ending of the legislative session in early spring resulted in the bills from the Water Quality Task Force being passed by only one house of the legislature. It is likely that many of those bills will be brought up again in the upcoming session. However, they will need to start over again in the process and could change.
- **Redistricting** – It’s just around the corner and the governor has been holding listening sessions on this issue.