



School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin

Government Affairs Report (Nov. 2012)

OVERVIEW:

November has come and gone, but the results of the fall elections (Nov. 6) will be felt for at least the next two years. President Barack Obama easily won Wisconsin on his way to a second term in office, and Democratic Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin defeated former Gov. Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin's U.S. Senate race. However, despite big wins for Democrats at the top of the ticket, Republicans captured control of the entire state Legislature on Election Night.

After losing control of the State Senate in last June's recall elections, Republicans headed into Election Night as the minority party. Republicans needed only one pick-up to recapture the majority, but they won two additional seats. They now have an 18-15 seat majority. Republicans also did well in the Assembly. Heading into the elections, the GOP held a 58 to 38 seat majority in the 99-seat Assembly, with one independent and two vacancies. They now enjoy a 60-39 majority.

The GOP's success in state legislative races, which was helped by once-in-a-decade legislative redistricting, gave Republicans complete political control of state government for the next two years.

It didn't take long for lawmakers to leave the elections behind and prepare for the 2013-14 legislative session. All four partisan caucuses of the Legislature have already met to elect their new leadership teams. While leadership elections went generally as expected, Senate Democrats did select a new leader after Sen. Mark Miller (D-Monona) decided not to seek a second term in the top position. Please find below the rest of the legislative leadership election results:

- **Assembly GOP:**
 - Assembly Speaker: Rep. Robin Vos (Burlington)
 - Majority Leader: Rep. Scott Suder (Abbotsford)
 - Assistant Majority Leader: Jim Steineke (Green Bay)
- **Assembly DEM:**
 - Minority Leader: Peter Barca (Kenosha)
 - Assistant Minority Leader: Sandy Pasch (Shorewood)
- **Senate GOP:**
 - Majority Leader: Sen. Scott Fitzgerald (Juneau)
 - Senate President: Sen. Mike Ellis (Neenah)
 - Senate Assistant Majority Leader: Sen. Glen Grothman (West Bend)
- **Senate DEM:**
 - Minority Leader: Sen. Chris Larson (Milwaukee)
 - Assistant Minority Leader: Sen. Dave Hansen (Green Bay)

The leaders of the majority party have the most influence in the Legislature. Among other sweeping powers, they create the standing committees in the Assembly and Senate and appoint a chair along with a majority of the membership for each committee. This process is currently underway.

The Legislature's committee structure and membership make-up is extremely important, as every legislative proposal must first be approved by a standing committee before it can be considered for final passage.

Committees of significance to SNA-WI include the Health and Education Committees in the Assembly and Senate as well as the powerful Joint Finance Committee, which rewrites and approves the two-year state budget. State appropriations for school nutrition programs must be approved by the Finance Committee.

While little legislative activity will occur between now and inauguration day on Jan. 7, the SNA-WI Government Affairs Team will remain busy preparing to meet the challenges of the next legislative session.

Please find below the November 2012 SNA-WI Government Affairs Report:

ADVOCACY EFFORTS:

- The SNA-WI Legislative Committee is currently planning the Association's state advocacy day (i.e., "Day at the Capitol") to give SNA-WI members an opportunity to meet with their legislators in Madison to discuss policy items important to school nutrition professionals. The event will provide members with a unique opportunity to receive professional advocacy training, build/strengthen working relationships with their lawmakers, and advocate for critical school nutrition policy changes.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

- **2013-14 budget request** – The SNA-WI Legislative Committee reconfirmed at its November meeting that School Breakfast program funding should be the Association's top state budget priority. However, the Committee remains undecided on which course of action to pursue:
 - A budget motion that would transfer 75% of current WI School Day Milk program funding to the School Breakfast program. The initiative would increase School Breakfast funding by \$462,825 (this legislative proposal is currently being drafted).
 - A budget motion to increase School Breakfast funding by 10% over the current budget levels.

The Committee directed the SNA-WI lobbyists to meet with the Governor's office to discuss both options.

- **Meeting with the Governor's office** – The SNA-WI lobbyist met with Gov. Scott Walker's office twice in November to discuss school nutrition funding and policy issues:
 - The SNA-WI lobbyists met with the Governor's policy team to discuss the Association's state budget priorities. The meeting focused on School Breakfast funding and the SNA-WI proposal to transfer 75% of current WI School Day Milk program funding to the School Breakfast program. While the Governor's office did not commit to supporting the proposal, they were at least open to the idea of using existing resources to enhance the School Breakfast program.
 - In the second meeting with the Governor's office, the Association's lobbyists, along with the SNA-WI Legislative Chair Renee Slotten-Beauchamp R.D., C.D., met with the Governor's policy director. The discussion focused on School Breakfast funding as well as non-fiscal policy initiatives that could improve school nutrition programs across the state. The meeting resulted in two positive outcomes: 1.) The Governor's office will continue to consider School Breakfast funding and provide their feedback (although it's uncertain if the Governor will take an official position); and 2.) SNA-WI was asked to submit a list of non-fiscal policy ideas to improve school nutrition in Wisconsin. The SNA-WI Legislative Committee is currently working on the list.