

Legislative Committee
Monday, December 28, 2009
JAMES P. COUGHLIN CENTER

Present: Stan Kline, Nancy Barker, Don Griesbach, Bill Wingren, Pat Brennand, Ken Robl, Jim Koziczowski, Tom Widener, Harvey Rengstorf, Tom Ellis, Jerry Finch, David Albrecht, Jef Hall, Jo Sievert, Patrick O'Brien and Kathy Lennon

Also Present: John Casper – Oshkosh Chamber, State Senator Hopper, and Diane Fremgen – Clerk of Courts

Excused:

Absent:

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 A.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The minutes from the November meeting will be ready for approval at the next meeting.

UPDATE ON THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Senator Hopper told the committee that they were called backed into session late in December to deal with OWI legislation. There were some key changes made to crack down on repeat offenders. He went over some of the changes which include making it a misdemeanor to drive with a child in the car on the first offense. The fourth offense is now a felony, and there are stiffer monetary penalties on every offender. There is also an expansion of the Winnebago County Safe Streets Program. Because of this program, repeat offenses are much lower in Winnebago County than in the rest of the state.

Senator Hopper hopes that the focus will now shift from drunk driving to jobs. There is 6.8% unemployment rate in Winnebago County. We are 51st out of 72 counties. That is down from 6.9%, but still up from the 4.6% unemployment a year ago. These numbers don't include the long term unemployed. These are people who have been unemployed for more than 27 weeks. Last month, for the first time in the history of the State of Wisconsin, there are more government jobs than there are manufacturing jobs. Wisconsin was the number one state for manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Hopper discussed with the committee the governments' broken promise to school students. In 2006, Governor Doyle announced the Affordability Package, where if 8th grade students signed the covenant that they would stay in class, stay out of trouble, help out in their community, maintain a B average, and apply for state and federal financial aid. The state would then pay for their education. Now the government is saying that it will only pay for two years. Senator Hopper feels that the government should not make promises that they can't keep, and they need to budget honestly and realistically.

There is a move on behalf of some of the legislators from Milwaukee County to try to in the next census, eliminate county convicted felons in the census count. This would affect Winnebago County in a big way because shared revenue figures would be reduced. The thought is they can't vote, so they shouldn't be counted. This doesn't make any sense, since we count illegal immigrants and they can't vote either. The 18th Senate district has one of the largest prison populations in the state. Senator Hopper will keep the committee updated on this matter.

OPPOSE AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PRESUMPTION FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN PROCEEDINGS REGARDING BENEFITS FOR FIRE FIGHTERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

When the original law was enacted, it was for protection of fire fighters and protected employees. It also somewhat protected volunteer organizations that did not have coverage for their people. When this bill first came to Madison, it was for correctional officers only. At the last minute, other groups were included.

Correctional officers have no right to know the medical history of an inmate who may have assaulted them.

The bill is requesting coverage from day 1 of employment. In other words, it is assumed that the diseases covered in the bill were contracted because of employment.

The bill does not discuss who is funding this coverage. It is more than likely the employer who will be paying the majority of the expense.

Jef Hall moved and Nancy Barker seconded to support the act establishing a presumption for infectious diseases.

The committee discussed the resolution.

The final vote – 6 – Ayes and 10 – No. This will not be going forward to the County Board.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MAINTAINING CURRENT LAW REGARDING JURISDICTIONAL AMOUNTS AND COURT FEES IN SMALL CLAIMS ACTIONS – Diane Fremgen – Clerk of Courts

This resolution would create a tiered system for small claims. Large filers would pay higher fees (20 or more claims per year) and the limit is \$5000.00. Smaller filers (20 or less) would be paying a smaller increase in fees, but their limit would be \$10,000.

Wisconsin Counties Association discussed this in early December, but took no action on it.

The increase in filing fees will be kept by the county. Ms Fremgen feels that this bill is going to be problematic for her staff. She foresees increased time spent with litigants. The ones without a lawyer representing them will need guidance and since the staff are not attorneys they are not allowed to advise them.

Harvey Rengstorf moved and Pat Brennand seconded to support maintaining the current law regarding small claims. This is passed 15 – 0. Jerry Finch was absent for the vote.

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT SPOSING AB 403 AS IT IS CURRENTLY WRITTEN

This resolution is regarding the government insurance property fund. This bill requires the commissioner of insurance to reduce a local governmental unit's premium for insuring property through the fund by the amount the local governmental unit paid in premiums on that property.

Discussion occurred with the committee regarding this bill.

Jef Hall moved and Pat Brennand seconded to oppose AB 403. This was carried by Voice Vote 16-0

RESOLUTION OPPOSING MAKING PROTECTIVE RETIREMENT A MANDATORY SUBJECT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

This bill will add a number of participants, in protective occupations, to the Wisconsin Retirement System through collective bargaining.

This was discussed by the committee and it was moved by Bill Wingren and seconded by Pat Brennand to table this item. This was carried by voice vote.

RESOLUTION OPPOSING MOVING PROPERTY TAX VALUATION AND ADMINISTRATION TO THE COUNTY LEVEL

After discussion with the committee, Jerry Finch moved and Harvey Rengstorf seconded to oppose moving property assessment to the county level.

It is felt by this committee that the local municipalities know the value of their communities and that is where the assessment should stay.

After further discussion the vote was taken and it passes 16 – 0 and this will be forwarded to the County Board.

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MAINTAINING CURRENT LAW REGARDING WHEN ELECTIONS ARE HELD FOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

This is constitutional amendment that coming forward to move the election of these offices to the November election. The reason for this is that there are typically more voters at the November general election than the Spring Election. However, the spring election is non-partisan. The fall election is partisan. Discussion occurred with the committee.

Pat Brennand moved and Harvey Rengstorf seconded to support leaving the elections of Supreme Court Justices and State Department of Public Instruction in spring.

This was carried 16 – 0

There was no correspondence to share with the committee.

The next meeting will be on Monday, January 25, 2010. Please give any items for the agenda to Stan in a timely manner.

It was moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 AM.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Nancy Barker
Secretary

Recorded By:
Jean Mahy
County Clerk's Office