

Rep. Sinicki's statement about passage of mining bill by Wisconsin Assembly

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"I'm so disappointed that Assembly Republicans passed SB 1 this evening after refusing to really consider any of 17 amendments Democrats offered. Their past claims of bipartisanship sound pretty hollow today. Our amendments would have created real environmental protections in the bill, as well as added provisions to help insure Wisconsin workers get a fair shot at jobs created by a mine in their own state.

"Republicans passed this bill even as complaints surfaced about the Gogebic Taconite owner's environmental record at his Illinois coal mines. His managers there have violated the effluent standards in their wastewater permit 53 times in three years, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency records. For Wisconsin Republicans to go ahead and pass SB 1 for the benefit of the same unreliable mine owner is reckless and knowingly irresponsible.

"All their promises of jobs for Wisconsinites sound pretty hollow, too. Those jobs could easily go to out-of-staters, like the Marquette Interchange jobs went to many, many Illinois workers. No state can tell a company to hire specific categories of workers; it's against federal law. So how can Republicans make these assurances? I believe they'd tell Wisconsin workers anything just to get this bill through.

"And, we know how bogged down projects like this can get as they inch through the bureaucracy and the courts. Any real jobs are a long ways off, if they materialize at all.

"Governor Walker and his legislators will have a lot to answer

for after shoving SB 1 through this Legislature.”

The bullies aren't just in school

*By Representative Christine Sinicki
Wisconsin 20th Assembly District*

I can't help believing there's more than meets the eye to the Republicans' new restrictions on what citizens can and can't do or have in the Assembly galleries. Some of the new rules make sense because respectful behavior in the galleries is necessary for floor debate. But there's something else going on behind all these new rules, rules, rules. Last night it hit me what that is, while watching a program about bullying in schools. I realized, they're scared. Just like kids who bluster and terrorize, Assembly Republicans actually are scared behind the blustery face of their obligatory 1000% pro-gun agenda.



It's a paradox, given all the Republican boasting about how great it is that they allow guns anywhere in state Capitol (except in offices with "No Gun" signs). In the Assembly, Republicans could have, but refused, to prohibit guns in our galleries, located above the floor, from where members of the public view the proceedings.

Even though they're the ones refusing to prohibit guns up there, it makes sense they're nervous anyway. Who can feel totally comfortable down there on the floor waiting like sitting ducks for some angry citizen in the gallery who decides to use their gun? We all should be worried! Honestly,

I have to block thinking about it while I'm on the floor, otherwise it's much too anxiety producing.

This is especially true since Republican leadership changed the gallery where the public is permitted to sit. Before the concealed carry law passed, the public sat in the gallery extending over the Republicans' seats on the floor. Now, the gallery that's open is on the opposite side of the chambers. From this vantage point, visitors see more Democrats than Republicans.

Our state Senators, on the other hand, acted like normal people when faced with the potential for gun threats from the galleries. They prohibited guns in the Senate galleries, end of discussion. It's the Assembly Republicans who have painted themselves into a corner. Now they have to contort themselves to get around what they well know could be a dangerous situation someday.

But instead of backtracking like sane people would and prohibiting guns in the Assembly's galleries, Assembly leadership is going forward with many extra rules to reduce the chances that guns could be carried into the galleries and have restricted everybody else's rights in the process. Now they prohibit just about everything an individual could take into the gallery with them including backpacks, messenger bags, and large purses. I suppose this way it's unlikely anyone could smuggle a large weapon into the gallery—a sawed-off shotgun, an extra-large handgun, ammunition clips. (They have prohibited not only all electronic devices but also paper: books, writing paper, magazines, newspapers, and yes, even coloring books. Last session a family was actually removed from an Assembly gallery because their child was coloring while her parents watched the proceedings.)

So, in the name of guaranteeing some people their rights (to carry a gun), yet trying to protect themselves from those same people, Assembly Republicans have restricted other citizens'

rights to carry their everyday possessions. In this convoluted situation, Republicans have ended up discriminating against non-gun owners, who simply want to assemble peacefully to exercise their right to watch their state government in action.

Of course, Republicans have been afraid of something else, too, since their misbehavior on the floor last session. They're still afraid of basic public scrutiny. Visitors can see much more floor activity in person from the gallery, than they could watching Wisconsin Eye. (*Wisconsin Eye is wonderful but must abide by restrictions on when they film legislators during floor session.*)

I believe Assembly Republicans should rescind permission to carry guns in the galleries. However, their new gallery rules indicate they are moving in the opposite direction. From now on citizens could wait hours in the gallery without even a newspaper to read, much less an iPhone to read it on. And heaven forbid they bring their kids. Kids might want to bring crayons and paper, and those dangerous 'weapons' are not allowed.

Rep. Christine Sinicki requests Governor Walker to veto entire Wisconsin 2011 biennial budget bill

Wisconsin 20th Assembly District Rep. [Christine Sinicki](#) wrote a [letter](#) to Governor Walker requesting that he veto the entire 2011 Biennial Budget Bill. She accuses him of bridging budget

shortfalls by targeting the poor and vulnerable citizens of Wisconsin, which she describes as a “reverse Robin Hood policy.” She cites cuts to the UW System, and cuts to the Earned Income Tax Credit and Homestead Tax Credit.

The governor is scheduled to sign the budget bill somewhere in the Green Bay area this weekend. His office issued a statement addressing requests to veto portions of the budget bill:

We've received requests on all sorts of provisions in the budget, which have covered a wide range of issues. We have been contacted by between 15-20 GOP legislators and a decent number of Democrats as well. Issues have ranged from the property tax exemption for the press house to the modifications made to Wisconsin's beer distribution laws. We're continuing to evaluate these requests and will make any veto related announcements once decisions have been finalized.

Note: Rep. Sinicki's office issued a correction to a footnoted citation in her letter.

These articles discuss the data referred to in the last part of letter, not the Wall St. Journal, as cited in the letter. The figure used is in a chart in the first article.

<http://sociology.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>

Also:

http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cwed/wp/wealth_in_the_us.pdf

<http://www.vanityfair.com/society/features/2011/05/top-one-percent-201105?currentPage=1>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/07/obama-chamber-of-commerce-speech_n_819571.html

<http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in->

Chris Larson wins Wisconsin, State Senate, District Nine seat; Richards, Sinicki retain seats

Larson , Chris Dem	37,164	57%	
Ripp , Jess GOP	27,779		43%
State Senate – District 7 – General Precincts Reporting – 100%			
Sinicki , Christine (i) Dem	10,844	53%	
McGartland , Molly GOP	9,502		47%
State Assembly – District 20 – General Precincts Reporting – 100%			
Richards , Jon (i) Dem	15,122	69%	
Burns , Krista GOP	9,502		31%
State Assembly – District 19 – General Precincts Reporting – 100%			

Counting overseas military ballots

Over the last decade it became clear in many states that U.S. citizens abroad had become an often disenfranchised group of voters. Civilians abroad have always expected mail delays to the United States, but that reality has been aggravated for our service people, especially those stationed as far away as Pakistan and Afghanistan. The maze-like U.S. military mail system far surpasses civilian international mail in its tardiness in delivering and returning ballots home in time to be counted. Too often, military ballots in particular went unopened, having arrived past the due date.

To remedy this appalling problem, the president signed the U.S. Military & Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act in 2009, requiring each state to write plans to ensure counting of overseas ballots from military and civilian voters.

A key provision in MOVE requires a 45-day pre-election ballot turnaround time. Unfortunately, this creates a hardship for states like Wisconsin with late primaries in September. The late date, and slow military mails, conspire to make it almost impossible for elections officials to send and receive overseas ballots back in time.

As allowed under MOVE, the state applied for a waiver of the 45-day rule in order to rectify this problem for the coming November 2010 election. Even though the federal government denied Wisconsin's original waiver request, our state Government Accountability Board (GAB) refused to accept the

decision, and finally negotiated a waiver with the U.S. Department of Justice. The agreement was reached last month giving Wisconsin five extra days this fall (so 50, instead of 45) to send, receive, and count overseas ballots.

County and municipal clerks will be required to prepare and send the absentee ballots a few days earlier than usual. They must also count ballots cast and postmarked by Election Day, if received by Nov. 19.

In the future, the permanent time restrictions in the MOVE Act will prompt Wisconsin to reexamine its absentee ballot and elections rules in order to consistently be in compliance. And the time may well have come for true reconsideration of the timing of Wisconsin's presidential preference primary and the fall primary election before the year 2012.

Chris Sinicki is the state representative for Wisconsin's 20th state Assembly District, which includes southern Bay View, St. Francis, Cudahy, the airport, and other parts of the south side. Her website is chrissinicki.net and she can be reached at (888) 534-0020 or rep.sinicki@legis.wi.gov.

Fix the Hoan!

Last year Wisconsin won a major grant of federal stimulus money for a high-speed rail link between Milwaukee and Madison. The enormous positive impact of this \$810 million investment by Washington in our regional economy shouldn't be underestimated. The money is unquestionably a financial win for Wisconsin taxpayers, but it does raise a question of priorities in Washington, D.C. for the thousands of commuters who drive back and forth across the Hoan Bridge daily.

However great the need for the rail link between Milwaukee and Madison, the need for real repairs, not just patches, to the Hoan Bridge is immediate.

It's important that we fix our existing infrastructure and demonstrate responsible stewardship of our current assets, even if we do have another big new project on the schedule. Our officials did well in winning the federal rail money, but that project was considered before we knew extra netting must be hung under the bridge and that repair needs were urgent.

In light of recent developments, I appreciate that Congresswoman Gwen Moore has identified potential funds that might possibly be tapped for true redecking of the bridge.

Even with this possibility, it remains to be seen whether our state Department of Transportation (DOT) will admit that the roadbed of the Hoan, a heavily traveled roadway, needs to be reconstructed, not just patched up like any ground-level road. They need to understand that this needs to happen now, not years after the next gubernatorial administration, along with Milwaukee Manufacturers and Commerce (MMAC), decide what they think is the best thing to do with the Hoan.

Obviously WisDOT officials, the governor's staff, and probably most MMAC members, do not use the Hoan daily in their commute to and from work. Maybe they should start listening to the thousands and thousands of drivers who do, every day, so they can get it right, now.

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Freeway construction update

The second year of I-94 work is in full swing as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation reconstructs 35 miles of the main freeway and 17 interchanges from the state line north through the Mitchell Interchange. Here are summaries and previews of coming freeway changes for south shore residents.

Layton Avenue

The Layton Avenue bridge over I-94 was demolished mid-February and is being reconstructed. Layton Avenue from 13th to 20th streets, the I-94 West (northbound) exit to Layton Avenue, and the I-94 East (southbound) entrance ramp at Layton Avenue will reopen in fall 2010. The northbound entrance ramp to I-94 and southbound exit ramp to Layton Avenue will remain closed until the Mitchell Interchange is completed in late 2012. During these closures at Layton Avenue, motorists are encouraged to use College or Howard avenues with 27th Street or Howell Avenue.

Eastbound Airport Spur

The eastbound Airport Spur bridge over the freeway was demolished mid-March and is being reconstructed. The I-94 West (northbound) exit to the Airport Spur was closed until late June; motorists should exit at College Avenue, proceed east to Howell Avenue, then north to the airport.

I-94, Main Freeway

Construction is also occurring on the I-94 freeway lanes from College to Layton avenues, and on the I-94/I-43 freeway lanes from 13th Street to Howard Avenue. Motorists may notice they are traveling on the inside lanes of the I-94 main freeway in

Milwaukee County, as crews work to build the new collector-distributor lanes and bridges. In late fall, traffic will be shifted to the new outside roadway and crews will swap work areas to reconstruct the inside lanes.

Other Ramps

Motorists will also notice lane closures on the I-894 East system ramp to I-94 West (northbound) as construction crews reconstruct that ramp. Additionally, the I-43/94 northbound exit ramp to Howard Avenue is closed until winter 2010.

More Info

WisDOT encourages you to visit the project website, plan94.org, for the latest information to help you plan ahead. You can also call the project hotline 24/7 at (262) 548-8721.

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2010 legislative session in review

The conclusion of the legislative session in Madison is a good opportunity to review accomplishments as well as focus on work yet to be done. As the 20th Assembly District representative, serving Cudahy, St. Francis and Milwaukee, I advanced legislation on a variety of issues.

As the chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor I worked to

shield Wisconsin's labor force from the broader economic downturn. I authored, and the legislature passed, Wisconsin's Equal Pay Enforcement Act, protecting every employee in Wisconsin from workplace discrimination.

Because ensuring the solvency of the state's unemployment insurance fund is vital to our economic security, I authored Assembly Bill 5-2009 Wisconsin Act 1-to extend emergency benefits for those affected by job loss.

My colleagues and I passed reforms reining in the pay-day lending industry to help borrowers break the debt-cycle; we reduced the profitability for lenders of trading bad debt.

To help reduce administrative costs in the public sector, I worked with Mayor Barrett to pass legislation to streamline the hiring process for city of Milwaukee civil service; Milwaukee had been the only municipality in the state subject to a 100-year-old statute which required costly extra hoops in the hiring process.

At the request of veterans in our district, I introduced Assembly Bill 752 to provide a geographic residency requirement for members of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Board. We also passed Senate Bill 627, creating a women veterans license plate, which will raise funds for Wisconsin veterans.

Working with the Humane Society, we passed a bill to require a bittering agent be added to antifreeze; I'm very pleased to say the bill was signed into law May 18. At no cost to the taxpayer, the bill will protect hundreds of our pets from sickness and death due to accidental antifreeze ingestion each year.

Despite our accomplishments, it is important to remember there is still much to do; elected officials should maintain focus on protecting the existing quality jobs on which communities rely, while working to create new ones and bring this economy

back to full employment.

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The Voter Protection Act

April 22 was the last major floor period of this two-year state Legislative session. On this final day, the state Senate decided to finish their business before the Assembly even started their session. That means that all bills not yet passed in the Senate are now "dead," until they can be reintroduced in January 2011. The Wisconsin Voter Protection Act (VPA) was one such bill, and will not pass in the 2009-10 Legislature.

The VPA is centered on a few main components. The bill would modernize our voter registration system by using secure data-sharing technology. This provision has been tarred and feathered in talk radio's echo chamber in an irresponsible and misleading way. The fact is, improved uses of technology directed by the VPA would bolster voter protections, streamline inefficient methods of voter registration, and make sure our list of eligible voters is as accurate as possible.

The VPA would allow the forwarding of Department of Transportation (DOT) information to the Government Accountability Board (GAB), which would cross-reference the voter registration list to prevent the registration of ineligible voters. Adding these additional cross-checks will make the ballot box more secure. The bill further protects

elections by specifically prohibiting polling places from being located anywhere that would give an advantage to a political party. And, municipal clerks' offices must still staff polling places.

These cross-checks would enhance the security of voter files. The VPA would also allow voters to use 21st-century technology with online registration. All of these provisions would allow increased access to registration and voting for eligible citizens, while protecting the security of the process.

The VPA would streamline absentee voting, including the adoption of required federal standards for our military personnel. Absentee registration would take place via an *opt-in* process whereby a voter *must request* to be placed on the permanent absentee ballot list. The U.S. Post Office would be prohibited from forwarding absentee ballots or delivering them to an old address if someone has filed change-of-address or forwarding request cards. Finally, the VPA proposes to increase penalties for voter fraud and voter suppression.

There's been a great deal of unnecessary political rhetoric and, I think, fear-mongering about this bill. From my reading of it, ballot security and protecting citizens' rights are really what it is about.

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Job creation is priority

The most important thing we can do in the state Legislature is to pursue policies that get Wisconsin back on firm economic ground. That means doing everything we can to make sure there is a good paying job for everyone who is looking for work.

We have taken important steps toward that goal in the Legislature. The 2009-11 state budget we passed last year included over \$200 million worth of tax incentives designed to attract, keep, and expand business in our state. The results really speak for themselves:

- Republic Airways will be keeping 800 jobs in Oak Creek and move 800 new jobs to the region this year.
- Mercury Marine is staying in Fond du Lac, saving 850 manufacturing jobs and adding several hundred more to the area.
- Enzymatic Therapy in Green Bay is moving their Utah plant to Wisconsin and consolidating all their operations in Green Bay-saving 280 jobs and creating 100 additional positions.
- Rapid Diagnostek and VitalMedix, two of Minnesota's most promising biotechnology startups, left Minnesota and have relocated to Wisconsin. In fact, about 20 biotech firms are expanding or relocating to Wisconsin.

In addition, the Assembly followed up these measures this year with the New Market Jobs Credits Bill. This bill, which passed by a vote of 93-1, is modeled on a successful federal program that has already encouraged more than \$8.3 billion in investments to finance manufacturing ventures, grocery-anchored retail centers, health care facilities, and mixed-use real estate projects in hard-hit urban and rural areas. Data show that every \$1 of foregone tax revenues under this program leverages about \$12 of private investment in distressed communities.

There is much more to do. Job creation will continue to be my highest priority as we move forward in the remaining months of the legislative session. Working families are the foundation of our state's economy; our recovery will not be complete until everyone who needs a job can find one. We in the Legislature must continue to act as quickly as possible to provide relief to aid workers and job creators.

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Geographically balancing veterans' representation

As a state representative I've several times nominated a highly qualified Milwaukee veteran to sit on the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) board. The nominations received no response from the governor's office. I checked to see who from this area was already serving, but found no DVA board members from the greater Milwaukee area.

That led me to look at the historical makeup of the board. I discovered only one Milwaukee County veteran appointed to the board since 1991. Waukesha and Green Bay, home to the third- and fourth-largest veterans' populations, have had only had one board representative since the end of the Vietnam War. Other regions, like the Fox Valley, have seen equally long droughts.

State law only specifies that the seven DVA board members must have seen active duty, two in Vietnam. Though brief, the spirit of the law is important as a guide for the executive appointment power, to ensure the DVA board is a representative body. However, since large swaths of the state's veterans population have been underrepresented, many state veterans have started to feel disenfranchised by the DVA board. They're uneasy about its ability to represent the interests of all Wisconsin veterans, since currently four DVA board members live in Dane County, and the rest in western and northern Wisconsin.

I decided to spell out the spirit of the law more clearly. I have introduced Assembly Bill 752, requiring geographic representation on the DVA board. State veterans groups, including the American Legion, AMVETS, and Purple Heart Veterans, strongly support this change.

The fix is simple and logical: my bill divides the state veterans population into seven districts of about 65,000 veterans each. The bill requires each member of the seven-seat board to represent one of those districts. The governor retains the power to appoint members, and the bill won't replace any current, confirmed board members. It also requires that the districts be redrawn every 10 years if their population has changed.

All of our state's veterans deserve to know their concerns are being weighed fairly in the DVA boardroom.

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New appliance rebate program

Last year, the “Cash for Clunkers” program had people rushing to car lots to exchange their vehicles for more fuel-efficient versions. It was a program that helped families save money and supported American jobs at a critical time, all while doing something good for our environment.

Now, there’s a new program with a similar goal-only this time, we’re talking appliances instead of cars.

The federal government recently approved the Wisconsin State Energy-Efficient Appliance Rebate Program. The state was awarded nearly \$5.5 million for consumer rebates, and cash-back rewards started Jan. 1.

This means that, if your family is in the market for a new furnace or boiler, you could qualify for a \$200 rebate. You could also get a rebate of \$100 for washers, \$75 for refrigerators, and \$25 for dishwashers. Several other appliances will qualify for cash-back rewards too, though clothes dryers and stoves won’t count because they aren’t Energy Star rated.

In order to get your rebate, you’ll need to fill out an application within 30 days of your purchase, attach a copy of your receipt and send those materials to the address on the application form. You should get a rebate check in the mail within six to eight weeks.

This new program will help you and your family make valuable improvements in your home. It will save you money when you buy your appliances, and also in the long run, as you save on energy bills. At the same time, “Cash for Appliances” will also boost retail sales, and in turn, support businesses and

employees.

Since I took office last year, it's been my top priority to set our state on a path to recovery and future success. If we're going to build up this economy, we must support Wisconsin families, business owners, and workers. This rebate program will go a long way toward helping all three groups. Two hundred dollars off a furnace or \$75 off a fridge means a lot to a family budget-and the collective benefit of this program could mean a lot for Wisconsin businesses and the state's overall economic outlook. More program info at focusonenergy.com.

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