

# AFFORDABLE WISCONSIN AGENDA

## Senate Democrats' Affordable Wisconsin Agenda

From Kenosha to Superior, Prairie Du Chien to Marinette, Wisconsinites in every corner of our state are facing rising costs across the board. As President Trump and the Republican Congress choose the 1% over working families, Republicans in Madison refuse to come to work, ignoring the real challenges facing Wisconsinites of all walks of life. In contrast, Wisconsin Senate Democrats are committed to addressing the every-day challenges that rising costs are creating for our residents.

We are announcing our 'Affordable Wisconsin Agenda Tour', focusing on the issues that affect everyone in Wisconsin and the resources we all rely on. **Healthcare, childcare, housing, energy, and groceries** are essential to every single one of the almost 6 million people who call Wisconsin home. But there is no question that each and every one of these must-haves for all Wisconsin families has become far too expensive for the average Wisconsinite. That is why, while Wisconsin Republicans play political games, pass blame, skirt responsibility, and, arguably most damningly, refuse to use their legislative majority to address these realities, Senate Democrats are going to be hitting the road to hear from real Wisconsinites.

We will be holding events, visiting businesses, and having the important conversations necessary to move our state forward and protect our residents' bottom line. The issues are clear, voters across the country have been calling on elected officials to work to lower costs for years and Wisconsin's Senate Democrats are committed to doing just that. Over the coming months Senators will be speaking to voters across the state on the struggles they are facing with the rising costs of healthcare, childcare, housing, and groceries before returning to Madison to introduce legislation that will ease these burdens on Badger State families.

Guiding principals of the Affordable Wisconsin Agenda Tour:

### **Making Childcare Affordable and Accessible For Our Young Families.**

The parents of young children across our state are facing the same issue; there is not enough childcare and the care that does exist costs far too much. The amount of childcare workers in Wisconsin has dropped steadily [since 2010](#) and far too often our communities are faced with the unfortunate reality of childcare centers closing their doors due to [lack of support from the state](#), a [decreasing workforce](#), and not being able to [make ends meet](#).

With limited childcare options, our parents are forced to sit on waiting lists for years at a time to find a center that will watch their kids, and once they do they are forced to pay an exorbitant amount of money. In Dane County, it can cost a family upwards of [\\$20,000 a year](#) to find full time, group childcare for an infant. This is 3x more than what is considered affordable across the country. State-wide the average cost of childcare exceeds [\\$14,000 a year per child](#).

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If we want to strengthen the future of Wisconsin we must do more to make it possible for our hardworking families to raise their children in our state. This begins with making childcare more affordable and accessible for everyone. Senate Democrats will lead the charge in lowering the cost of childcare and with consultation from Wisconsin parents and childcare professionals, we will propose comprehensive legislation to do exactly that.

## **Ensuring Wisconsin Residents Can Afford To Buy A Home.**

Across our country, the median age for a first time home-owner has risen to [38 years old](#), an all time high. The clear and simple explanation for this is that the cost of buying a home has become far too high for the vast majority of young professionals. In just the last few years the median cost of a home in Wisconsin has risen nearly another [10% to over \\$330,000](#). Out-pacing, in every aspect, the rate of wage and wealth increases.

If we do not act, Wisconsin will lose professionals from every field, simply because they cannot afford to live in the Badger State. For those living in Wisconsin currently, we have seen reports of residents being forced to make impossible decisions to cope with the cost of living. Going as far as to [delay medical care](#) in favor of paying their housing expenses. We are failing our residents by placing them in the position where they are forced to make decisions such as these.

The issues Wisconsinites face when it comes to buying a home can be addressed in Madison and Democrats across the state are committed to making it easier to build homes, making it less expensive to buy a home, and creating a stronger economy that encourages professionals to stay in and move to our incredible state. We will be working with current and future homeowners, organized labor, developers, and realtors to introduce legislation that makes buying and owning a home in Wisconsin a more reasonable and more affordable reality for all.

## **Easing The Burden of Healthcare Costs.**

As the Trump administration, Wisconsin's Republican Congressmen, and Republicans in Madison praise the Big Ugly Bill Trump signed over the summer, Wisconsinites across our state are going to suffer and the cost of our healthcare will continue to rise. As a result of the administration's attack on affordable healthcare, [over 270,000 residents will lose their health insurance, and healthcare costs in our state will increase by over \\$280 million](#). Despite the fact that healthcare is consistently among the most [important issues to voters](#), Republicans in DC and in Madison continue to make it more difficult and more expensive for people to receive the care they need.

Even before this summer's attacks on healthcare, Wisconsin had some of the most expensive healthcare costs in the country. Reports find that Wisconsin hospitals charge more than [315% of medicare rates](#). One of the highest rates in the nation and significantly higher than any of the surrounding states. This is a clear sign that the already far too expensive healthcare costs in the Badger state will only continue to rise unless we act.

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Lowering the cost of healthcare and medicine throughout Wisconsin is and will continue to be a goal of the utmost importance. Our sick, our seniors, our kids, and everyone in between should never have to decide if they can afford to go to the doctor, or if they have to ration their medication. Our guiding principle must be to keep the residents of Wisconsin safe and healthy. While our state's Republicans have seemingly abandoned this goal, Senate Democrats will fight to ensure that each and every Wisconsinite can receive necessary care without the threat of debt or bankruptcy.

## **Cutting Energy Costs Across Our State.**

As we move into colder seasons, we know hardworking families across Wisconsin will feel more pressure as increased energy usage leads to higher bills to heat homes and keep Wisconsinites warm during the winter.

Rather than recognizing the problem of rising energy costs in our state, Republicans in congress and in Madison supported Trump's efforts to kill the clean energy projects here and across the country that would have [saved Wisconsinites money and created thousands of jobs](#) across our state. We are committed to an 'all of the above' energy policy, which includes clean energy as long as it leads to better functioning utilities and money in the pockets of our hardworking residents.

Furthermore, there are Republicans who continue to stand in the way of offering our utilities companies the right-of-first-refusal when it comes to strengthening and updating our energy infrastructure. Meaning that instead of keeping [Wisconsin dollars and jobs in Wisconsin](#), they would rather hire out-of-state contractors to update our energy grid. Unlike our colleagues across the isle, we know a Wisconsin job should be done by a Wisconsin resident – and we know our energy grid needs updating. We will work to end this partisan gridlock in Madison, cut energy costs across our state, and keep Wisconsin on the track towards a more affordable future.

## **Feeding Wisconsin.**

Trump's Big Ugly Bill did more than just remove hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites from their health insurance and raise healthcare costs by hundreds of millions of dollars. It also ensured that [tens of thousands of Badger State residents would lose their access to food](#). In a country that is seeing prices rise across the board, the most basic need our friends and neighbors have is food and Republicans across the country and our state are working to make it harder for Wisconsinites to eat.

Wisconsin Republicans have attacked SNAP benefits, supported tariff taxes [that brutalize](#) our farmers' bottom lines, and killed programs that benefit both farmers and consumers in Wisconsin. [The Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance Program](#) paid Wisconsin farmers to grow food for food pantries and instead of celebrating a program that feeds our hungry residents

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and strengthens our economy Republicans shuttered the program. Taking money out of the pocket of [nearly 300 farms](#), diverting over \$4 million of food, and denying more than 250 food pantries and schools a resource they rely on.

The cost and accessibility of food are affecting everyone across the state. As Republicans attack programs meant to feed those in need, prices at the supermarket continue to climb. We've seen the cost of [eggs, meat, fish, coffee](#), and more rise despite Republican promises to cut costs. In [July alone](#), Wisconsin saw the cost of food increase by 4% across the board.

In order to strengthen Wisconsin's economy, protect Wisconsinite's bottom lines, and build a stronger future for all Badger State residents we must address the epidemic of rising costs in our state. From energy, healthcare and housing to childcare and groceries, Senate Democrats are committed to lowering costs and ensuring everyone is able to afford to live in our beautiful state. We are looking forward to seeing you on the road as we tour the state and speak to voters about the changes they are looking for, the struggles they are facing, and the hopes they have for the future.