



ROBERT WITTKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 62nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TESTIMONY: SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND REVENUE

January 11, 2022

Chairman Kooyenga and Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on an important constitutional amendment, **SJR 84**, regarding expenditure of moneys Wisconsin receives from the federal government. Never before have we seen this much federal money pour into our state - it is, I believe, a defining moment in our state's history – to have one person alone make the decision for where the money is spent just isn't good governance no matter the political affiliation.

SJR 84 would restore a balance to how Wisconsin manages federal money we receive. It was back in the 1930's when the Legislature changed their role in the dispersing of federal dollars and granted authority to the governor. While I cannot speak to the intent of the Legislature at that time, I would imagine the decision was based on a need for efficiency as the federal funding to states increased. Most recently the federal government has sent billions into Wisconsin with more than \$4 billion designated specifically for the governor to disperse at his discretion alone, and billions more identified for specific spending by the federal government for Wisconsin. In a day and age when we can click and slide funds on our phones to anyone, I don't believe that's what the Legislatures of the 1930's really intended with finding an efficiency for dispersal of federal money.

SJR 84 would put the Legislature and specifically a joint committee of the legislature back into the decision making process. Giving a voice in the process to all 72 counties in the state is important for good governing of state resources.

Thank you for holding a hearing on SJR 84, I hope you'll move the resolution out of committee for full Senate action.



DALE KOOYENGA

STATE SENATOR · 5TH DISTRICT

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January 11, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Revenue

FR: Senator Dale Kooyenga

RE: Support for SJR 84 – Restoring legislative accountability in the expenditure of funds received from the federal government

Thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Joint Resolution 84. This resolution, up for first consideration before the Legislature, increases accountability, efficiency, and transparency in the expenditure of funds received from the federal government by restoring the Legislature's role in approving those expenditures.

The Wisconsin Constitution provides that the Legislature holds the power of the purse. Article VIII, Section 2 states in part, "No money shall be paid out of the treasury except in pursuance of an appropriation by law." The state Constitution clearly gives spending responsibility to the Assembly and Senate.

For much of Wisconsin's early history, lawmakers had the final say over the spending of all funds in the state treasury, no matter their source. However, legislators abandoned that important responsibility during the 1930s and 1940s as federal dollars began to compose a much larger share of state spending.

During that time, most authority over that growing pool of funds was given to the executive branch as past legislatures transferred to the governor unilateral authority to allocate funds received from the federal government through the enactment of several laws during and after the Great Depression era.

SJR 84 amends the Wisconsin Constitution by prohibiting the Legislature from delegating to the executive branch its sole appropriation authority over federal funds. Under the amendment, an initial allocation of federal funds may not be made without the approval of a joint committee of the Legislature.

This resolution is a reasonable, practical approach to enable more Wisconsin citizens to have their voice heard in the process of allocating federal funds by opening those decisions to the legislative process.

Thank you for hearing SJR 84. I respectfully ask for your support.