

## **Kenosha News**

May 24, 2007

By Todd Richmond, Associated Press

### **State Finance Committee wipes out funding for Parkside dorms, Kenosha museum; Vos cites fiscal prudence; Lehman worries about dorm crunch**

MADISON — No new dorms for the University of Wisconsin System. No student union renovations. And no money for a Hmong cultural center or Civil War museum to boot.

The Legislature's budget-writing committee on Thursday wiped all those projects out of the 2007-09 state budget. Republicans on the panel argued that they had to set priorities and draw the line on state debt, while committee Democrats said their GOP counterparts were being cheap.

"You want to save money but at the same time you don't want to be petty," said committee member Rep. Pedro Colon, D-Milwaukee.

Rep. Scott Suder, R-Abbotsford, a fellow committee member, countered: "Just because you have a credit card doesn't mean you have to max it out."

Gov. Jim Doyle's budget proposal had called for about \$540 million in new bonding for academic buildings at UW-Parkside in Somers, UW-La Crosse, UW-Madison, UW-Oshkosh, and UW-Superior; renovations at student unions at Madison and UW-Eau Claire; and suite-style dorms at Parkside, Madison, Oshkosh, River Falls, Stevens Point and Whitewater.

That figure also included new bonding for Hmong cultural centers in Madison and Milwaukee and a Civil War museum in Kenosha as well as bonding for the state Department of Veterans Affairs to purchase the office building it now rents.

The committee approved the academic buildings on a 16-0 vote, but erased the rest.

"We have to make sure we don't keep putting more and more on the credit card," state Rep. Robin Vos, R-Caledonia, a member of the committee, said. "That's an important message for us to send."

Democrats countered much of the bonding would be paid through fees and money from various programs run at the facilities. About \$60 million in the bonding would be made up through tax dollars, the fiscal bureau said.

Committee member Sen. John Lehman, D-Racine, said a lack of new dorms will drive students to other universities. He said Republicans were just posturing so they could say in their next campaign they saved the state so much in bonding.

“All we’re doing is taking a vote to keep students out of our universities,” Lehman said. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Madison, tried to convince Republicans the student unions at UW-Madison are aging and need repairs. Refusing to build new dorms means freshman will have to live in apartments, where they could suffer academically, he added.

Republicans said they didn’t want to saddle future generations of students with higher fees to pay off the dorms. Rep. Jeff Stone, R-Greendale, said students should choose a school for its academics, not its living quarters.

The committee’s decision is far from final. After the panel finishes revising the budget, the state Assembly and Senate must pass an identical version. That’s unlikely given that Democrats run the Senate and Republicans control the Assembly.

The budget could end up in a conference committee comprised of members of both houses. Once that panel hashes out its differences, the bill goes back through the Legislature. Then it goes back to Doyle, who can rewrite the document with his powerful partial veto before he signs it into law.

UW System spokesman David Giroux said UW officials will keep convincing legislators the dorms could mean the difference between a student choosing a Wisconsin campus or going elsewhere.

“The game’s not over at all,” Giroux said. “Those aesthetics do matter ... We have to think like a business. We have to think in terms of competition and market. And our market thinks with its feet.”

Doyle spokesman Matt Canter said nothing is over.

“The governor believes these are important projects for communities all across the state,” he said. “A lot can happen.”

The Kenosha Civil War Museum is well under way thanks to funding and commitments from other sources, including a \$5 million payment from the Town of Somers made as part of a boundary agreement with Kenosha.

Also under way is a student union expansion at Parkside, that is being covered in part by student fees.

<http://www.journaltimes.com/nucleus/index.php?itemid=13198>