



Advocacy Brief



January 2019

2019-20 State Legislative Session Begins

The Wisconsin State Capitol is once again in full-swing. Jan. 7, 2019 was inauguration day for Governor Evers, Lt. Governor Barnes and other newly elected state government officials, as well as for members of the state [Assembly](#) and [Senate](#). There are many new faces in the halls of the Capitol. New leaders are taking over the executive branch, the legislative branch has legislators leaving the Assembly for the Senate and new legislators are joining both chambers.

Governor Evers has selected Craig Thompson to serve as the Department of Transportation (DOT) secretary. Thompson had been serving as the executive director of the Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin (TDA) and previously was employed as the legislative director for the Wisconsin Counties Association. Andrea Palm was selected by Governor Evers to serve as Department of Health Services (DHS) secretary. Palm served as senior counselor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services under President Obama. She has also held key leadership positions for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton and Congressman Robert Matsui, as well as the White House Domestic Policy Council during the implementation and rollout of the Affordable Care Act. The DHS and DOT secretaries and other cabinet appointees will go through a public hearing process and require confirmation from the State Senate.



In the legislature, party leaders have appointed 16 members (8 Assembly/8 Senate) to the legislature's powerful [Joint Finance Committee](#) (JFC). This committee will begin work soon on the 2019-21 state biennial budget. Other committees will also begin their work soon. Find out what [committees](#) your legislators are serving on. If you don't already know your state

senator and assembly representative, now is a good time to introduce yourself. If you already know your state legislators, please continue to further develop your relationship with them. If you need to confirm who represents you in the state Senate and Assembly go [here](#). On the state legislature's homepage enter your home address in the white box under the heading "Who Are My Legislators?" (right-hand side about a 1/3 of the way down the page). As the new year begins, send a message to your legislators welcoming them back (if they are returning) or congratulating them (if they are new to the office). Let them know you are a resource to them for constituent concerns regarding aging and disability issues. Invite your legislators to see your programs firsthand or to attend an upcoming event you have scheduled. These interactions help your legislators better understand your programs and services and help you get to know your legislators and to discuss shared concerns and priorities.

In the coming weeks the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) will be seeking individuals willing to sign up to serve as a contact for their assembly representative and/or senator. Whether your legislator is a member of the Joint Finance Committee (or isn't but has a "buddy" on the JFC) or serves on one of the many committees that will take up legislation impacting older adults, there will be opportunities when a contact from you (phone, email, visit, public hearing, etc.) will be needed! Please consider signing up. Training and talking points will be provided, as needed.

For the first time in nearly a decade, Wisconsin will have a divided government. With a Democratic governor and a Republican legislature, political leaders will need to work across the aisle to advance shared goals. The [Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network's](#) priority issues continue to have bipartisan support. Supporting individuals to remain as healthy and independent as possible benefits everyone! Let's work together to improve supports for older adults and caregivers.

116th Congress Now in Session

Late last week, the 116th Congress officially convened. U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson returned to represent Wisconsin. New to Wisconsin's members of the U.S. House of Representatives is Congressman Bryan Steil (Dist. #1). Congressman Steil was elected to serve the district following U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan's retirement. See [Wisconsin-Members-of-Congress-116th](#) for the latest contact information for our federal legislators.



Partial Government Shutdown & the Federal FY 2019 Budget

A partial federal government shutdown has been in effect since Dec. 22, 2018 and many people are wondering how the shutdown will affect funding for variety of federal programs. The short answer is funding for Older Americans Act and many other aging services programs is not impacted by the partial government shutdown. The 115th Congress passed spending bills funding approximately three-fourths of the government through 2019 prior to the shutdown (Labor-HHS-Ed funding was approved at the end of Sept., 2018). Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare payments also will not be interrupted by the partial shutdown. These three programs are considered *mandatory* (vs. discretionary) spending and are not affected by the budget debate.



The longer answer to the question, however, is that many other agencies, programs and services of importance to older adults and all citizens are impacted by the shutdown. Nine federal departments do not yet have funding approved for FY 2019, including the Department of the Treasury, Department of Agriculture, Homeland Security Department, Department of the Interior, Department of State, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Department of Commerce, and Department of Justice. Many agencies were able to find short-term solutions to keep programs and services operating when the shutdown first began, but it is

becoming increasingly difficult to do so as the days and weeks go by.

Concerns have been raised regarding funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or FoodShare program in Wisconsin and the Commodities Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). These Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) programs are slated to run out of funds if the shutdown goes beyond Feb. The Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has set aside funding through February for elderly and disabled housing contracts and Section 8 vouchers; however, HUD is unable to renew expired contracts and landlords for HUD housing were told to access any reserve funds available to help cover expenses, maintenance and building improvements until the government reopens. The shutdown is also affecting air travel, federal courts, and national parks and museums. The shutdown is not expected to have any immediate impacts on existing transit and specialized transportation services or programs. This week, the Trump Administration announced the IRS will be issuing tax refunds despite the government shutdown. As most of the IRS employees responsible for processing returns and providing customer service have been furloughed, there are outstanding questions regarding by whom and how the work will be accomplished.

You're Invited to

Aging Advocacy Day!

May 14, 2019 Madison, WI

Join advocates from around the state to help educate state legislators about issues affecting older adults and caregivers in Wisconsin!

No experience necessary; training is provided prior to your meetings with state lawmakers at the State Capitol.

10:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Park Hotel, 22 S. Carroll St., Madison
and the Wisconsin State Capitol

Make a difference. Let your voice be heard!

Registration begins Feb. 26, 2019 at:
<https://gwaar.org/AgingAdvocacyDay>
or contact your local aging unit or ADRC.

Registration deadline is April 30, 2019.
#WIAgingAdvocacyDay #WIAAD

