

2026 WISCONSIN COUNTIES ASSOCIATION LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TEAM

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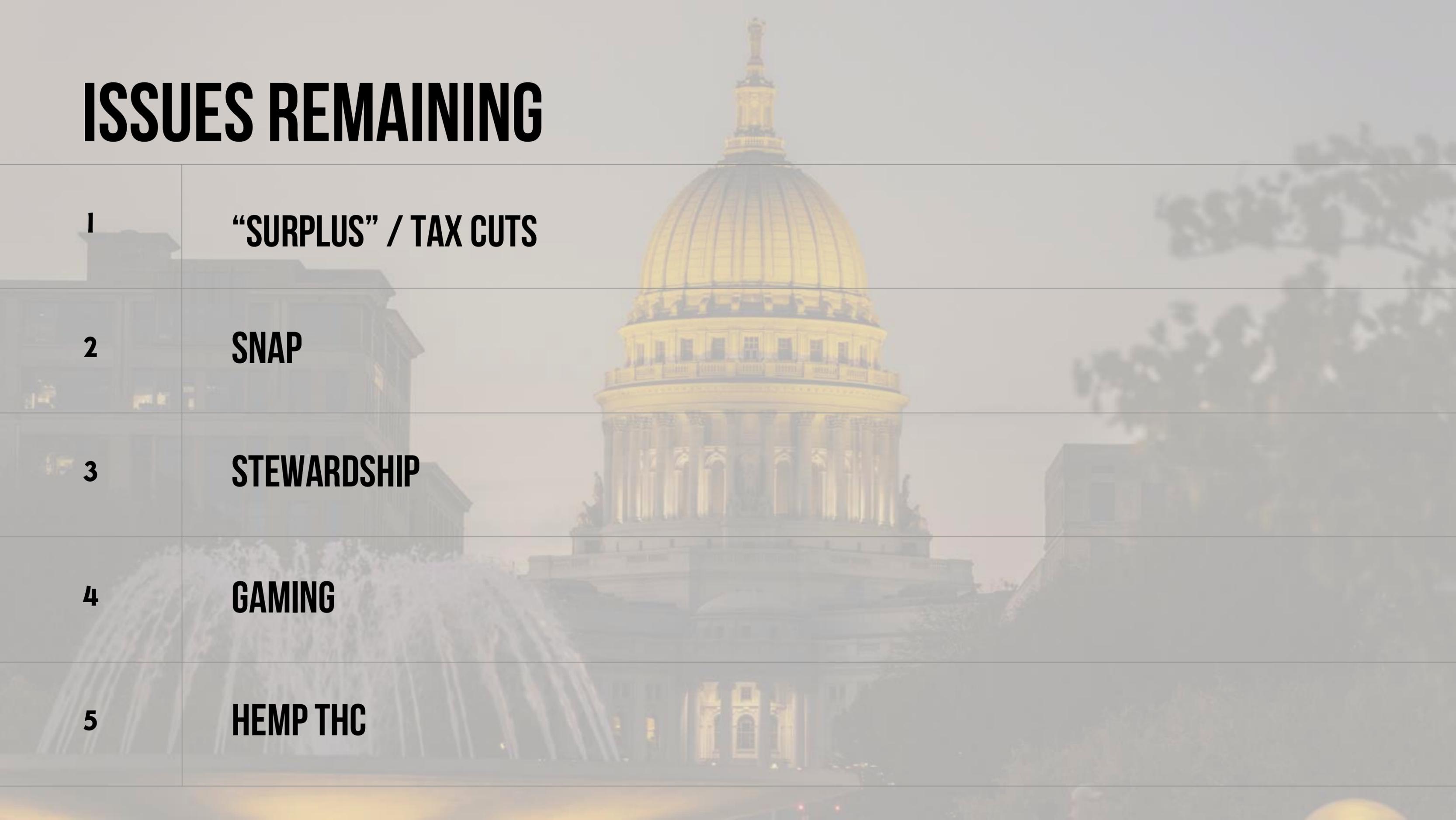


2025-26
LEGISLATIVE
SESSION

The background image is a faded, low-contrast photograph of the Wisconsin State Capitol building. The central focus is the large, ornate dome, which is topped with a golden spire. The building's facade features classical architectural elements like columns and arches. In the foreground, a large fountain with multiple jets of water is visible on the left side. To the right, there are silhouettes of trees and another building. The overall lighting is soft and diffused, suggesting an overcast day or a hazy atmosphere.

**SESSION COMING
TO A CLOSE**

ISSUES REMAINING



1

“SURPLUS” / TAX CUTS

2

SNAP

3

STEWARDSHIP

4

GAMING

5

HEMP THC



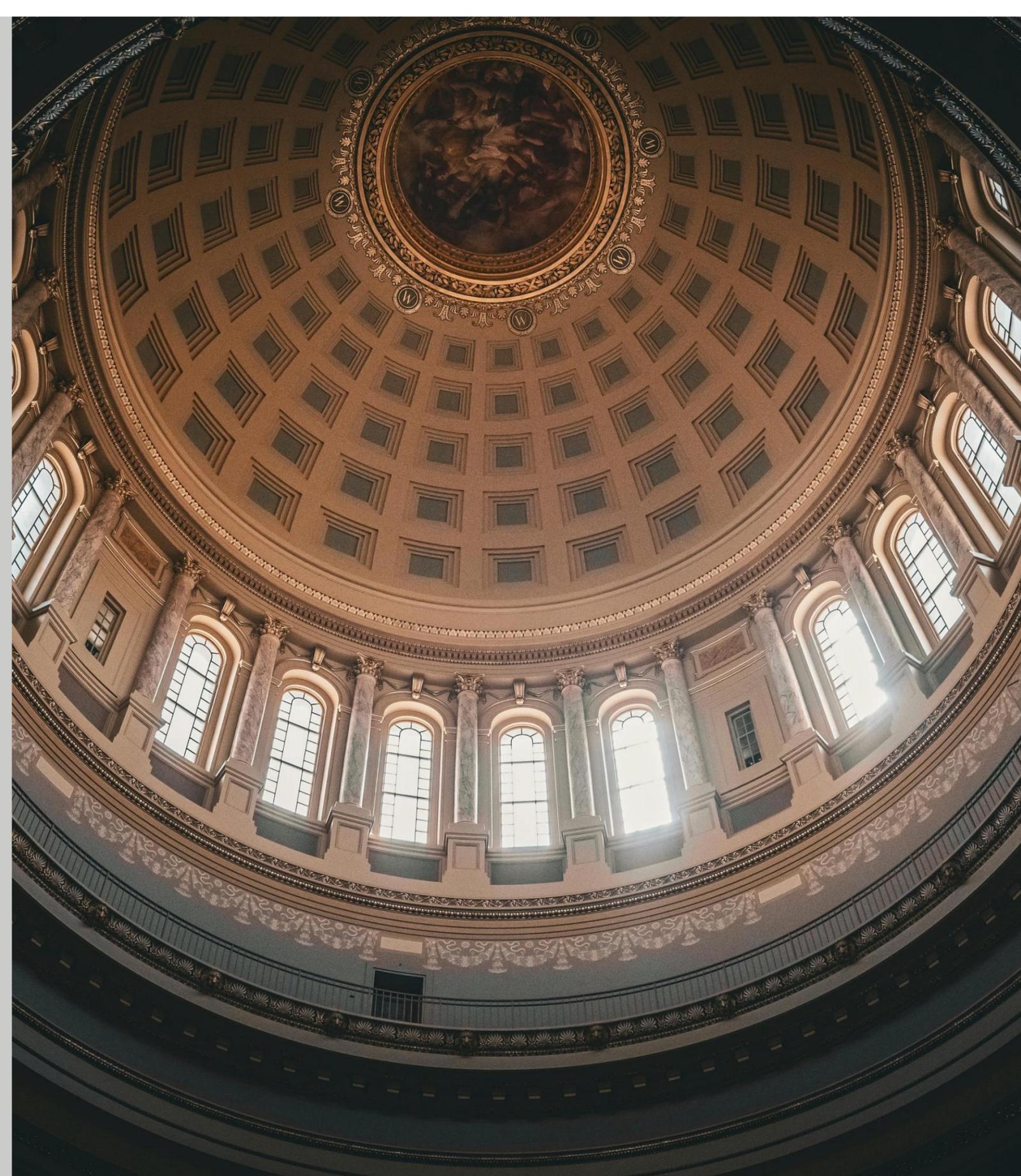
POST-ADJOURNMENT

**LEG. COUNCIL STUDY
COMMITTEES**

SPECIAL SESSION?

ELECTIONS

JUDICIAL & PUBLIC SAFETY





COURT FUNDING

**ASSEMBLY BILL 320/ SENATE BILL
383**

BACKGROUND

- **COUNTIES OPERATE THE STATE COURT SYSTEM**
- **PRIOR TO THE 2025-27 BUDGET COUNTY - STATE SPLIT WAS 80/20**
 - **CIRCUIT COURT COSTS APPROPRIATION 2024-25 = \$28.3 MILLION**
 - **COUNTIES SPENT \$236.9 MILLION IN CY 2023**
 - **ONLY \$183.7 MILLION WERE ALLOWABLE UNDER THE CIRCUIT COURT COSTS APPROPRIATION**
- **THE 2025-27 STATE BUDGET PROVIDED \$10 MILLION GPR**

STATE EXPENDITURES ON CIRCUIT COURTS

● 2013-14 ● 2015-16 ● 2017-18 ● 2019-20 ● 2021-22 ● 2023-24

\$200,000,000

\$150,000,000

\$100,000,000

\$50,000,000

\$0

2013-14

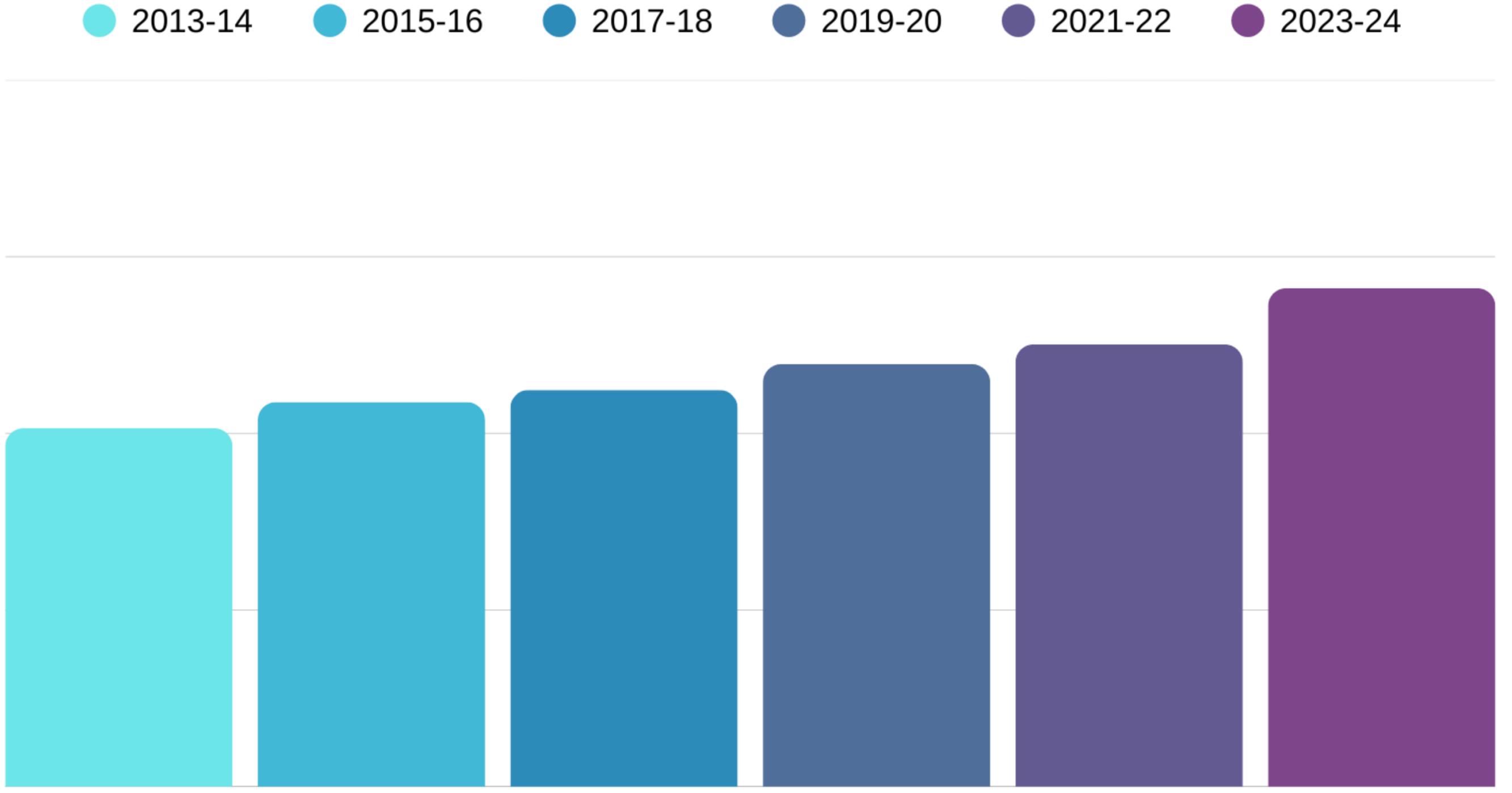
2015-16

2017-18

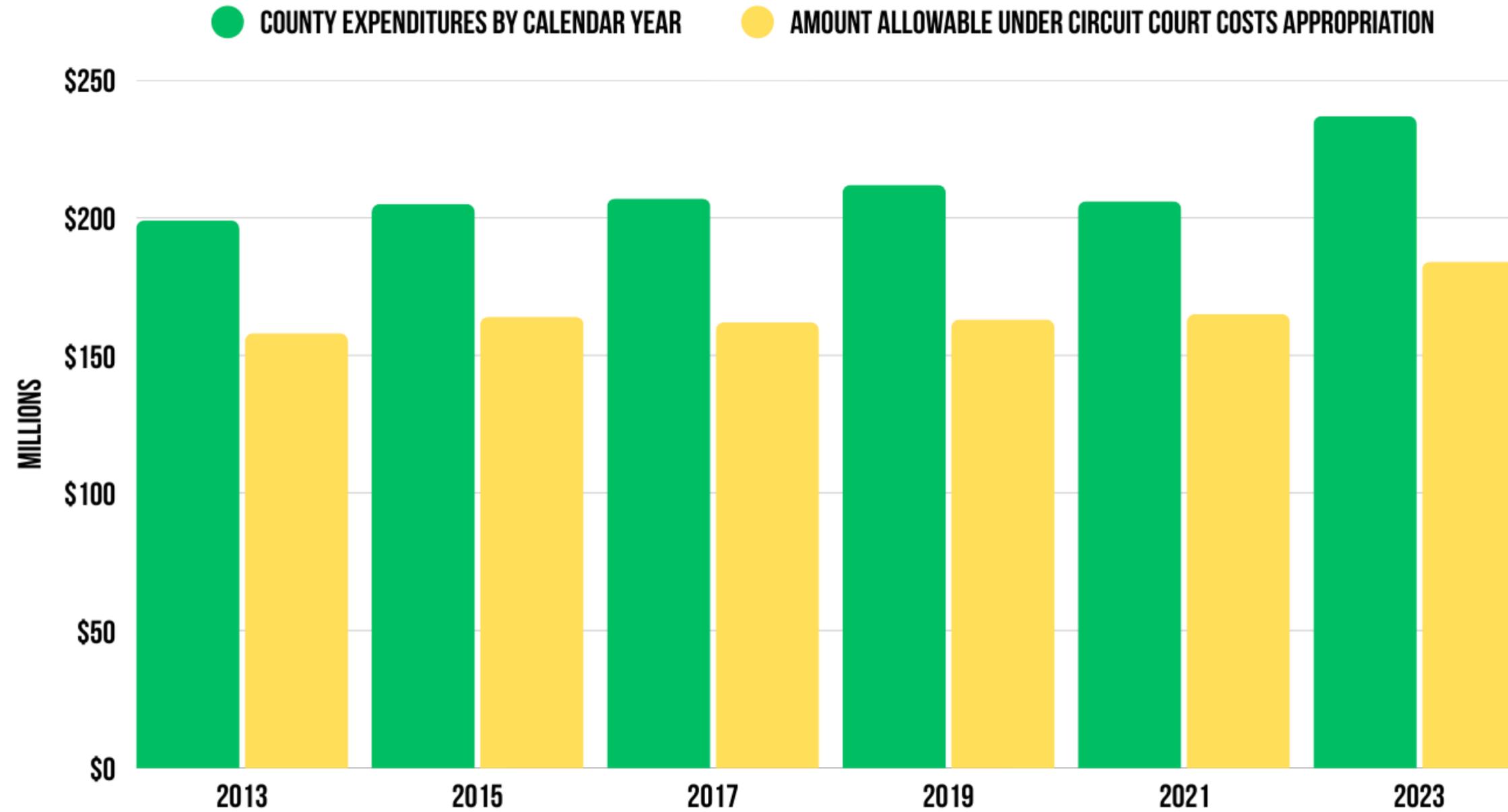
2019-20

2021-22

2023-24



COUNTY EXPENDITURES BY CALENDAR YEAR

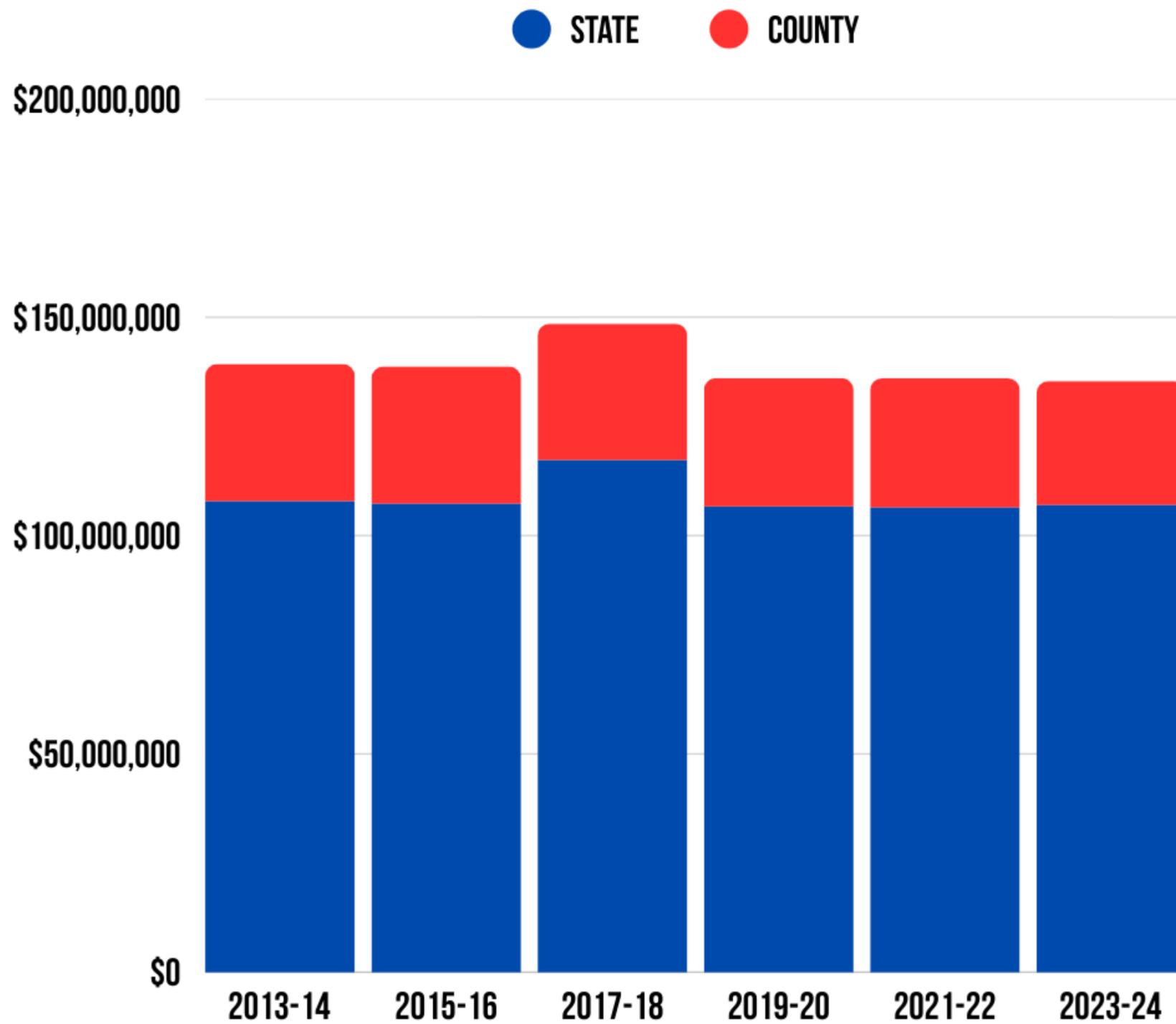


FEES/FINES/ FORFEITURES

- **FINES AND FORFEITURE AMOUNTS VARY DEPENDING ON SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS**
- **SOME OF THESE FINES AND FORFEITURES HAVE NOT BEEN INCREASED IN MORE THAN 30 YEARS**
- **FINES AND FORFEITURES COLLECTED BY COUNTIES ARE DEPOSITED TO THE STATE'S COMMON SCHOOL FUND**
 - **LEGISLATURE AUTHORIZED COUNTIES TO RETAIN 10% OF STATE FINES AND FORFEITURES**

FEES/FINES/ FORFEITURES

- **OF THE REVENUES COLLECTED IN 2023-24 (\$135.3 MILLION) COUNTIES REMITTED TO THE STATE \$107,043,900**
 - **THE REVENUES RETAINED BY THE COUNTY WAS JUST \$28,293,400**



**REVENUES GENERATED FROM
CIRCUIT COURT OPERATIONS
REMITTED TO THE STATE AND
RETAINED BY THE COUNTIES**

ASSEMBLY BILL 320/ SENATE BILL 333

- **THE LEGISLATION INCREASED THE STATUTORY FEES IMPOSED FOR VARIOUS COURT FILINGS AND OTHER PURPOSES**
- **INCREASED REVENUES WILL BE RETAINED BY THE COUNTY**
- **THE AMENDMENT LOWERED THE INCREASED AMOUNT FOR CERTAIN FEES AND SURCHARGES**
- **THE BILL AS AMENDED ALSO REQUIRES POSTING A NOTICE OF FEE WAIVERS FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND ALLOWING INTERPRETERS TO APPEAR BY PHONE OR LIVE AV MEANS IN CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS**

COURT SURCHARGES

CURRENT VS. PROPOSED

SURCHARGE TYPE / CASE TYPE	CURRENT AMOUNT	PROPOSED AMOUNT	AMOUNT TO DOA	NOTES
JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEM (JIS)	\$21.05	\$32.00	(NOT SPECIFIED)	GENERAL JIS INCREASE
JIS (SEPARATE PROVISION)	\$21.50	\$24.00	\$23.00	MAJORITY TO DOA
CSS – SMALL CLAIMS, GARNISHMENT, WAGE EARNER, 3RD PARTY CIVIL ≤ \$10,000	\$51.00	\$61.00	\$54.00	COUNTY GENERAL USE CSS
CSS – CERTAIN CASES WITH NO MONEY RECOVERY	\$68.00	\$81.00	NOT SPECIFIED	INCREASED FLAT SURCHARGE
CSS – CIVIL & OTHER ACTIONS > \$10,000	\$169.00	\$202.00	NOT SPECIFIED	HIGHER-VALUE CASES
SPECIAL PROSECUTION CLERKS (MILWAUKEE COUNTY)	\$3.50	\$7.50	NOT SPECIFIED	APPLIES WHERE JIS IS IMPOSED

CURRENT STATUS

- **AB 320 PASSED THE STATE ASSEMBLY ON JANUARY 21, 65-32 (BIPARTISAN)**
- **SB 333 PASSED THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY ON FEBRUARY 2, 8-0**
- **THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE APPROVED THE LEGISLATION ON FEBRUARY 3, 15-0**

The background of the image is a faded, light-colored photograph of the Wisconsin State Capitol building. The building's central dome is the most prominent feature, topped with a golden spire. In the foreground, there is a large fountain with multiple jets of water spraying upwards. The overall scene is captured in a soft, hazy light, possibly during dawn or dusk.

VIDEOCONFERENCING

**ASSEMBLY BILL 447 / SENATE BILL
448**

BACKGROUND

- **COUNTIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF A VARIETY OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS UNDER CHAPTERS 51 (MENTAL HEALTH) AND 55 (PROTECTIVE SERVICES)**
- **IN COURT PROCEEDINGS, COUNTIES ARE REQUIRED TO PRESENT REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MEDICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC EXPERT WITNESSES**
- **WITH APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS, VIDEOCONFERENCING IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS A WORTHY SUBSTITUTE TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS**
- **UNDER CURRENT LAW, IN-PERSON TESTIMONY IS AUTOMATICALLY REQUIRED IF A RESPONDENT OBJECTS TO AN EXPERT WITNESS TESTIFYING THROUGH THE USE OF VIDEOCONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY**

ASSEMBLY BILL 447 / SENATE BILL 448

- **THE BILL AMENDS STATUTE TO PROVIDE A COURT WITH FLEXIBILITY IN ALLOWING EXPERT WITNESSES TO APPEAR THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY EVEN IF A RESPONDENT OBJECTS**
- **UNDER THE BILL, A COURT WOULD EVALUATE THE FACTORS OUTLINED IN STATUTE TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS ARE IN PLACE TO ALLOW FOR THE UTILIZATION OF VIDEOCONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY**

ASSEMBLY BILL 447 / SENATE BILL 448

CURRENT STATUS

- **THE STATE SENATE PASSED ON NOVEMBER 18 ON A VOICE VOTE**
- **THE STATE ASSEMBLY PASSED ON JANUARY 22 ON A VOICE VOTE**

GENERAL GOVERNMENT



The background of the image is a faded, light-colored photograph of the Wisconsin State Capitol building. The building's central dome is prominent, topped with a golden statue. In the foreground, a large fountain with multiple jets of water is visible on the left side. The overall image has a soft, hazy appearance.

COUNTY BOARD COUNSEL

**ASSEMBLY BILL 807 / SENATE BILL
800**

BACKGROUND

- **WISCONSIN STATUTE 59.42 OUTLINES THE OFFICE OF CORPORATION COUNSEL**
- **CORPORATION COUNSEL ACTS AS THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER AND ADVISOR FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE COUNTY BOARD, DEPARTMENTS, AND OFFICIALS**
- **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL INCLUDE**
 - **CIVIL REPRESENTATION**
 - **LEGAL ADVICE**
 - **PUBLIC INTEREST CASES**
 - **CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT**

2013 ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION

- **CONCLUDED THAT A COUNTY BOARD HAS THE AUTHORITY TO AUTHORIZE AND APPROVED SEPARATE BOARD COUNSEL BY STATUTE 59.42(3)**
- **STATUTE EMPOWERS THE COUNTY BOARD TO RETAIN A DESIGNEE IN ADDITION TO HAVING A SALARIED CORPORATION COUNSEL**

ASSEMBLY BILL 807 / SENATE BILL 800

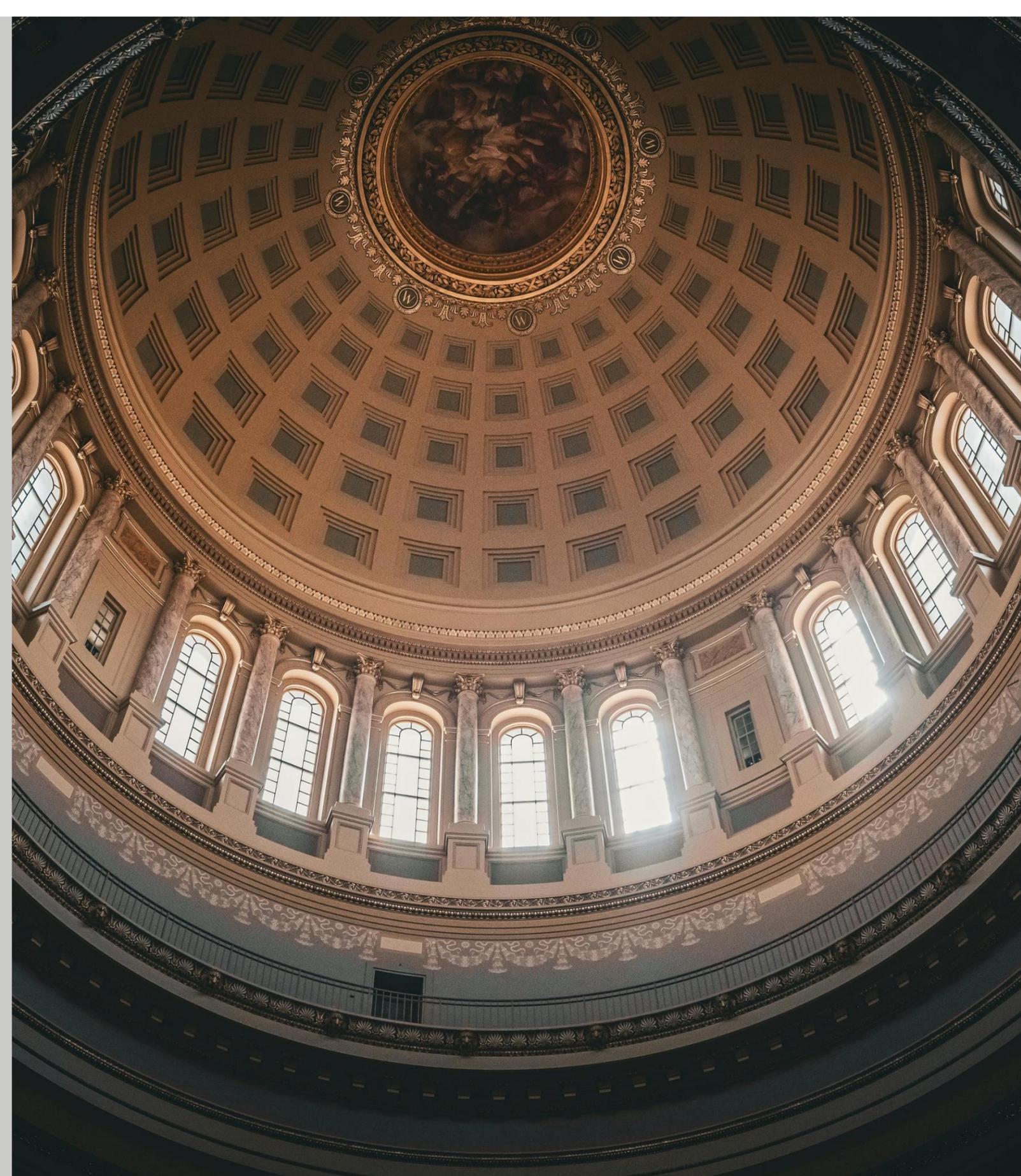
- **THE BILL CREATES THE OFFICE OF BOARD COUNSEL IN ANY COUNTY THAT EMPLOYS A CORPORATION COUNSEL WITH A COUNTY EXECUTIVE OR ADMINISTRATOR**
- **WCA IS OPPOSED TO THIS LEGISLATION**
 - **ALREADY HAVE THE ABILITY TO HIRE SEPARATE COUNSEL**
 - **WHAT DIFFICULTIES WOULD ARISE WITH A CORPORATION COUNSEL AND A COUNTY BOARD COUNSEL**
 - **COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS WORK AT THE PLEASURE OF THE BOARD AND THEREFORE IS UNNECESSARY IN THIS BILL**

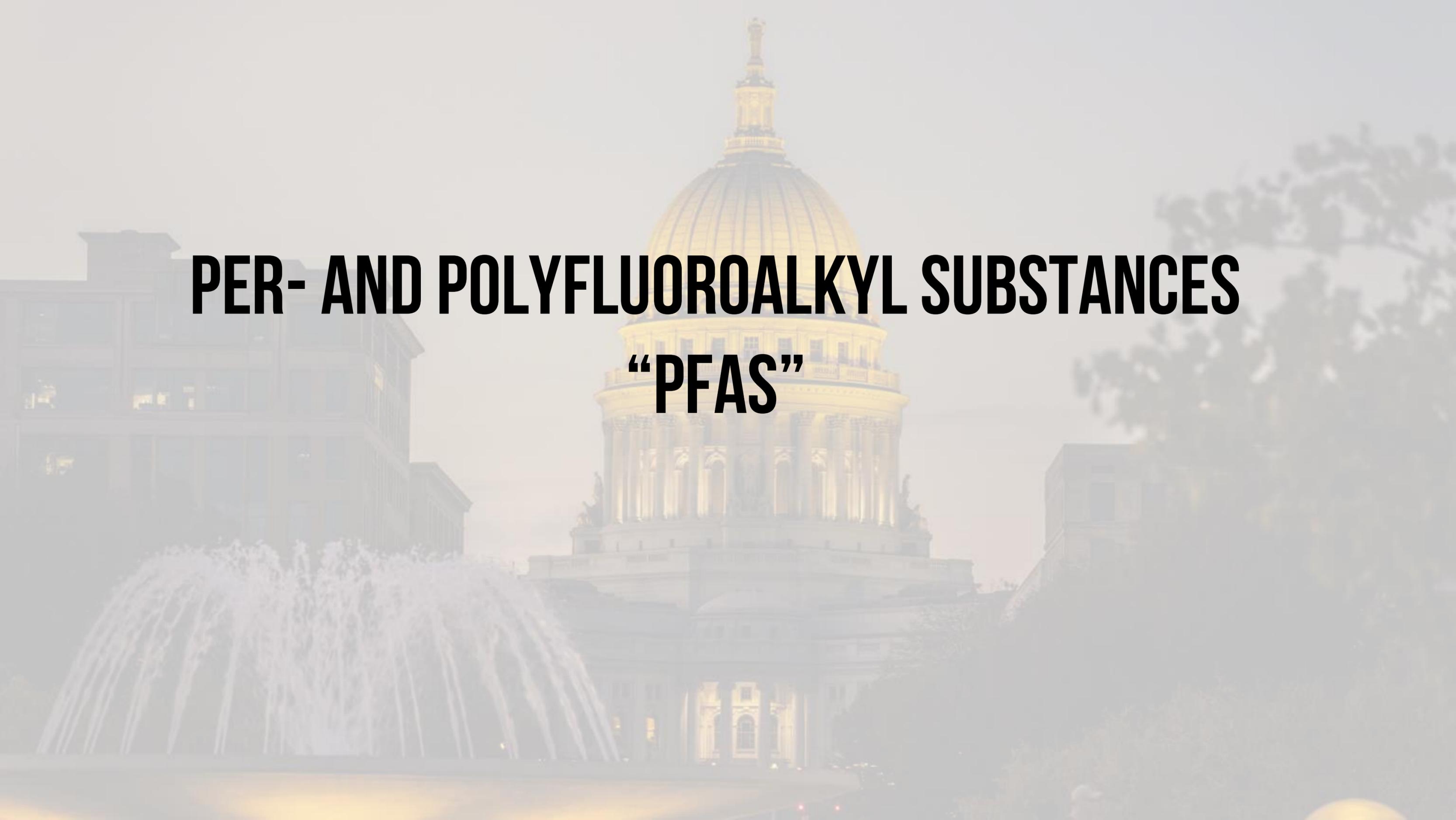
CURRENT STATUS

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT PASSED
THE BILL ON FEBRUARY 4,
2025**

**SENATE PUBLIC HEARING
SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY**

**AGRICULTURE,
ENVIRONMENT,
&
LAND USE**





PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES
“PFAS”

BACKGROUND

- **DISCUSSIONS BEGAN DURING 2023-24 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**
- **2023-25 STATE BUDGET HAD \$125 MILLION IN TRUST FOR PFAS TESTING AND REMEDIATION**
- **2023 SB 312 WAS INTRODUCED TO CREATE POLICY REGARDING THAT FUNDING**
- **LEGISLATURE PASSED SB 312, GOVERNOR EVERS VETOED SB 312**
- **CONCERNS OVER SPILLS LAW LOOPHOLE AND INNOCENT LANDOWNER PROTECTIONS**

CURRENT STATUS

- **2025 AB 130 & AB 131 WERE INTRODUCED IN MARCH OF LAST YEAR**
- **POLICY VS. FUNDING**
- **YEAR-LONG NEGOTIATING BETWEEN GOP BILL AUTHORS, DNR, AND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE**
- **CLOSE TO A DEAL — CONCERNS OVER FROM PRIVATE SECTOR OVER CONSTITUTIONALITY OF TREATING PUBLIC ENTITIES DIFFERENT THAN PRIVATE BUSINESSES**
- **OUR MAIN CONCERNS: AIRPORTS AND SOLID WASTE FACILITIES**
- **OVERALL SUPPORTIVE OF A COMPROMISE**

The background image is a faded, low-contrast photograph of the Wisconsin State Capitol building. The central focus is the large, golden dome, which is topped with a statue. Below the dome, the classical architectural details of the building are visible, including columns and arches. In the foreground, a fountain with multiple jets of water is active, creating a misty spray. To the left, a portion of another building is visible, and to the right, there are silhouettes of trees. The overall lighting is soft and diffused, giving the image a hazy, ethereal quality.

STEWARDSHIP

BACKGROUND

- **KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**
- **CREATED IN THE LATE 1980S**
- **PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION**
- **HAS BEEN REAUTHORIZED FOUR TIMES OVER ITS LIFESPAN**
- **LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS OVER THE YEARS**

STEWARDSHIP LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS

- **HOW MUCH LAND IS ENOUGH LAND?**
- **SHOULD THE STATE GOVERNMENT BE IN THE BUSINESS OF BUYING LAND?**
- **ARE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAMSTRINGING THEIR OWN PROPERTY TAX ROLLS?**
- **IS THE DEBT SERVICE WORTH IT?**
- **EVERS V. MARKLEIN SUPREME COURT DECISION**

STEWARDSHIP CURRENT STATUS

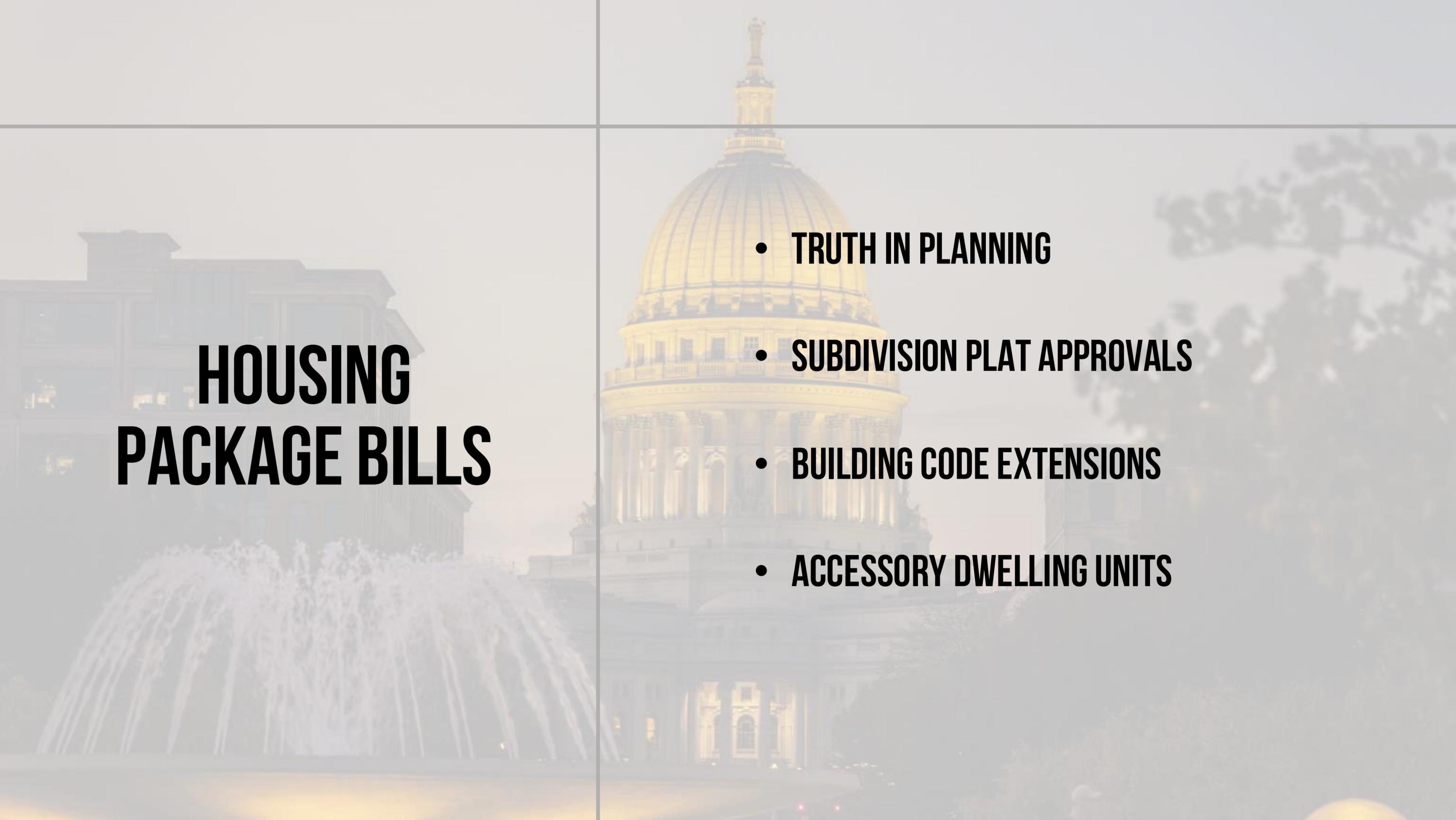
- **SENATOR PAT TESTIN AND REPRESENTATIVE TONY KURTZ**
- **STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM IS SLATED TO END AT THE END OF JUNE**
- **TRYING TO THREAD A NEEDLE**
- **CURRENT SOLUTION: REAUTHORIZE FOR TWO YEARS, DRASTICALLY DECREASE FUNDING, PUT A HIATUS ON LAND ACQUISITION, FOCUS ON LAND DEVELOPMENT, STUDY HOW MUCH PUBLIC LAND AND MFL LAND IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN THE STATE**
- **SUPPORTIVE OF KEEPING THE PROGRAM ALIVE OVER ALLOWING IT TO DIE**

The background image is a faded, low-contrast photograph of the Illinois State Capitol building. The central focus is the large, ornate dome, which is topped with a statue. The building's facade features classical architectural elements like columns and arches. In the foreground, a fountain with multiple jets of water is visible on the left side. The overall image has a soft, hazy quality, typical of a background for a text overlay.

HOUSING REFORM PACKAGE

BACKGROUND

- **GOP LEGISLATURE HAD CONCERNS OVER HOUSING STOCK AND AFFORDABILITY**
- **PUSH FROM THE BUILDERS, DEVELOPERS, AND REALTORS**
- **WCA AND TOWNS WERE BROUGHT IN LATE IN THE CONVERSATION**
- **WE WERE ORIGINALLY OPPOSED TO FOUR OF THE SEVEN BILLS**

The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale image of a city scene. On the left, there is a large fountain with multiple jets of water spraying upwards. In the center and right, a prominent domed building, likely a state capitol, is visible. The dome is illuminated from below, giving it a golden glow. The overall scene is set during dusk or dawn, with a soft, hazy light.

HOUSING PACKAGE BILLS

- **TRUTH IN PLANNING**
- **SUBDIVISION PLAT APPROVALS**
- **BUILDING CODE EXTENSIONS**
- **ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

HOUSING PACKAGE CURRENT STATUS

- **TRUTH IN PLANNING: REMOVED COUNTIES — PASSED ASSEMBLY**
- **SUBDIVISION PLAT APPROVALS: CHANGES WERE MADE — PASSED AND SIGNED**
- **BUILDING CODE EXTENSIONS: DROPPED OPPOSITION — VETOED**
- **ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS: REMAIN OPPOSED**



TAXES

The background image is a faded, low-contrast photograph of the Michigan State Capitol building. The central focus is the large, golden dome, which is topped with a statue. To the left, a multi-story building with many windows is visible. In the foreground, a fountain with several jets of water is active. The overall scene is set against a light, hazy sky, and the image has a soft, ethereal quality.

**BUILDINGS, FIXTURES, &
IMPROVEMENTS (BFI)**

BACKGROUND

- **2023 WISCONSIN ACT 12 — SHARED REVENUE BILL**
- **REPEALED PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX**
- **DIFFICULT DESCRIBING BFI STRUCTURES — PREVIOUSLY PPT, NOW REAL PROPERTY**
- **PROVIDE CONSISTENCY AROUND THE STATE**

BFI CURRENT STATUS

- **MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO GET EVERYONE TO A COMFORTABLE PLACE**
- **HAS BEEN EXECED OUT OF BOTH COMMITTEES**
- **HOPING FOR PASSAGE ON BOTH FLOORS AND THEN SIGNATURE FROM GOVERNOR**
- **NO CURRENT OPPOSITION TO THE BILL**

The background image shows the Wisconsin State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent golden dome. In the foreground, a large fountain with multiple jets of water is visible. The scene is captured in a soft, slightly hazy light, possibly during dawn or dusk. The text 'UTILITY AID PAYMENTS' is centered over the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

UTILITY AID PAYMENTS

BACKGROUND

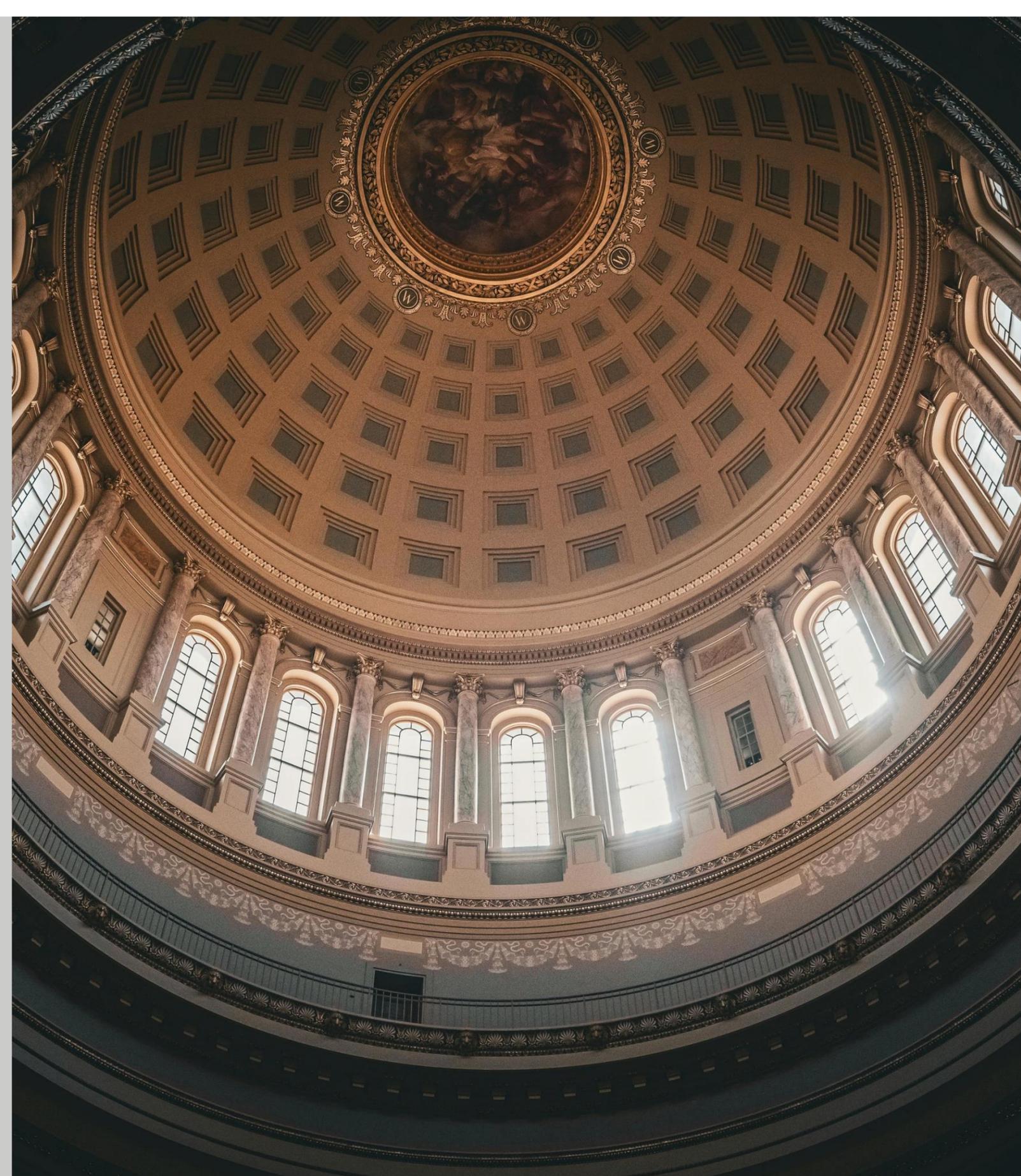
- **CURRENT LAW: BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS AND LIQUIFIED NATURAL GAS FACILITIES DON'T QUALIFY FOR UTILITY AID PAYMENTS**
- **THESE TYPES OF FACILITIES ARE BEING APPROVED BY THE PSC AND BUILT IN OUR COUNTIES**
- **WE SHOULD, AT THE VERY LEAST, BE GETTING PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES**
- **KNEW IT WOULD BE AN UPHILL BATTLE**



UTILITY AID CURRENT STATUS

- **GREAT WORK BY WCUA**
- **WORKED WITH THE UTILITIES TO BUILD A COALITION**
- **EDUCATED MEMBERS**
- **GOT UNANIMOUS VOTES IN BOTH COMMITTEES AND IN JFC**
- **ASSEMBLY WILL HOLD FLOOR VOTE TODAY!**

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



BACKGROUND

- **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FOODSHARE) IS JOINTLY RUN BY THE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**
- **IN WI, DHS ADMINISTERS THE PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNTY GOVERNMENTS**
- **SNAP PROVIDES NEARLY 700,000 WISCONSINITES WITH BASIC FOOD NECESSITIES**
- **FOR EVERY \$1 IN SNAP BENEFITS, GENERATES \$1.50 FOR OUR STATE'S ECONOMY**

WHAT CHANGED

- **AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, PRESIDENT SIGNED THE ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL**
 - **EXPANDED WORK REQUIREMENTS**
 - **POTENTIAL BENEFITS COST SHARE FOR STATES**
 - **FEDERAL CUT TO ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS**

CURRENT STATUS

- **WCA IS IN FULL SUPPORT OF DHS REQUEST FOR THE FOLLOWING:**
 - **\$32.4 MILLION GPR TO COVER INCREASE IN STATE ADMINISTRATIVE COST SHARE TO 75%**
 - **\$16.1 MILLION GPR FOR 56 NEW DHS STAFF AND COUNTY QUALITY CONTROL POSITIONS TO MAINTAIN LOW ERROR RATE**
 - **\$20.7 MILLION GPR FOR POTENTIAL FOODSHARE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (FSET) PROGRAM PARTICIPATION INCREASE**

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**WHAT'S NEXT
FOR US?**

MULTI-PRONGED PR CAMPAIGN GOALS

- **ELEVATE COUNTY CHALLENGES
AMONGST PUBLIC & LAWMAKERS**
- **ARTICULATE CONSEQUENCES OF STATUS QUO**
- **LAWMAKERS CHARGED WITH SOLUTION,
COUNTIES CHARGED WITH “TELLING THE STORY”**

MULTI-PRONGED PR CAMPAIGN EXECUTION

- **SOCIAL MEDIA (TARGETED & GEOFENCED)**
- **WCA STUDIO**
- **COUNTY TESTIMONIALS**
- **PUBLIC TESTIMONIALS**
- **COUNTY HOSTED TOURS FOR LAWMAKERS**