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2025-2026 Legislative Session

League Summary of Legislation of Municipal Importance

Bills Introduced March 31 to April 11

- **Senate Bill (SB) 180: Modifications to the Housing Loan Programs** - Sens. Quinn (R-Birchwood), Feyen (R-Fond du Lac), and Jagler (R-Watertown) and Reps. Armstrong (R-Rice Lake) and Brooks (R-Saukville) - Last session, with the League as one of a handful of groups at the table, the state made a historic investment of \$525 million for the development of housing across Wisconsin, with \$475 million of the \$525 million provided to three low-interest loan programs at the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA). However, an 11th hour amendment added to those bills made implementation problematic for developers. Despite some early successes, the problems created by the amendment last session became increasingly evident. As a result, this subsequent legislation is needed to address the significant barriers to these programs and unlock additional housing opportunities throughout the state. The various changes to existing law included in this legislation are briefly described below.
 - **Infrastructure Access Program** - *Assists municipalities and developers with financing for infrastructure costs related to workforce housing or senior housing projects*
 - Increases the maximum loan amount a developer may receive from 20% of project costs under current law to 33% of project costs under the legislation
 - Increases the maximum loan amount a municipality may receive from 10% of project costs under current law to 25% of project costs under the legislation
 - **Restore Main Street Program** - *Assists developers with financing for the rehabilitation of second- and third-floor rental housing units over a commercial space*
 - Increases the maximum loan amount from \$20,000 per dwelling unit or 25% of project costs, whichever is less, to \$50,000 per unit or 33% of project costs, whichever is less
 - Requires WHEDA to divide the state into regions based on Regional Planning Commission territories (with the counties not served by an RPC constituting one region) and caps the total loan amount a region may receive to 12.5% of the amount allocated
 - **Vacancy-to-Vitality Program** - *Assists developers with financing for the conversion of vacant and underutilized commercial properties into housing units*
 - Increases the maximum loan amount from \$1 million or 20% of project costs, whichever is less, to 33% of project costs with no cap on the dollar amount
 - Decreases the number of units that must be created for developments in municipalities with a population of 10,000 or less from the 16 or more dwelling unit requirement to 4 or more dwelling units (16 or more units are still required for populations above 10,000)
 - Allows a mixed-use development to qualify for the program, though the loan amount may only consider the costs associated with the residential portion of the development

- Requires WHEDA to divide the state into regions based on Regional Planning Commission territories (with the counties not served by an RPC constituting one region) and caps the total loan amount a region may receive to 12.5% of the amount allocated
- Changes to all three programs
 - Permits housing development projects benefiting from an active tax incremental district and/or historic tax credits to qualify for these programs
 - As a condition of loan eligibility for an applicant, current law requires the municipality to reduce the cost of housing for that project through a measure taken on or after January 1, 2023, whereas this legislation requires the municipality to reduce the cost of housing generally across the municipality since the beginning of 2023
 - Allows a municipality to certify that its satisfied the applicant eligibility requirement that the municipality has updated the housing element of its comprehensive plan within the five years preceding the loan application by adopting an ordinance or resolution certifying that the housing element provides an adequate housing supply that meets existing and forecasted demand in the municipality
 - Allows a loan to be secured by a corporate or personal guarantee as opposed to current law which requires the loan to be secured only by a personal guarantee
 - Allows loans to be awarded for projects on tribal reservations or trust lands and for projects completed by tribal housing authorities or businesses created by a tribal council

This legislation is a net positive to increase the utilization of these housing loan programs and includes several elements requested by the League. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*

- **SB 178: Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Changes** - Sen. Quinn (R-Birchwood) and Rep. Armstrong (R-Rice Lake) - This legislation makes several modifications to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program at WHEDA, including requiring that at least 35% of the tax credits allocated each year are for qualified projects in rural areas of Wisconsin if enough applications are available to satisfy the requirement. Other changes to the program remove a requirement that a project is financed with tax-exempt bonds and allows insurers that are shareholders of a tax-option corporation, a partner of a partnership, or a member of a limited liability corporation to claim the credit.
- **SB 175: Building Permit Fee Exemptions for Disabled Veterans** - Sen. Jacque (R-New Franken) and Rep. Snyder (R-Weston) - This legislation reduces building permit fees paid by disabled veterans to a local government if the improvements are necessary to accommodate their disability. To qualify, the improvements must be to their primary residence that is owned by the disabled veteran or their caretaker and the veteran must be classified as at least 50% disabled, and the local government may require proof of all the conditions above. If qualified, the local government must reduce its building permit fees by 75% or \$500, whichever reduction is less. The League thanks the authors and stakeholders for adding measures to limit the financial impact on municipalities in this legislation.
- **SB 173: Rural Creative Economy Grant Program** - Sen. Quinn (R-Birchwood) and Rep. Novak (R-Dodgeville) - This legislation creates the Rural Creative Economy Development Grant Program at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to award funding to cities, villages, towns, counties, tribal governments, economic development organizations, and nonprofit

organizations. The grants must be used to develop or implement a plan to increase tourism, enhance visitor experiences, or bolster community development in rural areas of the state by developing or promoting creative enterprises. Grants may also be used to market, brand, and promote local creative enterprises, public arts performances or exhibitions, or public spaces. Grants may not exceed \$50,000 and must be matched by the recipient. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*

- **SB 170: Rehiring of WRS Annuitants** - Sen. Marklein (R-Spring Green) and Reps. Wittke (R-Caledonia), Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay), and Rodriguez (R-Oak Creek) - Under current law, if a person is receiving an annuity from the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), they must suspend that annuity to be rehired by a WRS participating employer. This legislation allows annuitants rehired by a WRS-participating employer to not suspend their annuity for up to 60 months (5 years) if they retired on or after July 2, 2013, separate from employment for at least 75 days, did not have an agreement for employment upon retiring, and elect not to be a participating employee. The employer is required to make contributions for the employee as if they were a WRS participant. This legislation is the third proposal this session to address rehired annuitants, but the previous two only applied to certain public safety employees where this legislation applies to all local government employees. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
- **SB 169: Modifications to the Judicial Privacy Act** - Sen. Wanggaard (R-Racine) and Rep. Tusler (R-Harrison) - Last session, [2023 Wisconsin Act 235](#) established certain privacy protections for judicial officers upon submission of a written request (more information may be found [here](#)). Act 235 went into effect on April 1, 2025. This legislation makes several modifications to Act 235, including requiring notarization on a written request, further defining which government official must receive the written request, limiting the public posting or display prohibitions to exclude direct communications with the judicial officer or their immediate family, and adding liability protections for governments and their employees for failures to comply with Act 235 unless the liability is as a result of intentional or reckless actions, among other changes.
- **SB 168: Worker's Compensation Coverage for PTSD** - Sen. Jacque (R-New Franken) and Rep. Armstrong (R-Rice Lake) - Under current law, if a law enforcement officer or full-time firefighter is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of actions in their employment, they may receive worker's compensation for up to 32 weeks. Also under current law, emergency medical responders, emergency medical services practitioners, volunteer firefighters, correctional officers, emergency dispatchers, coroners and their staff, and medical examiners and their staff may receive worker's compensation benefits for PTSD, but they must demonstrate a diagnosis based on unusual stress of greater dimensions than the day-to-day emotional strain and tension experienced by all employees. This legislation replaces the latter standard with the requirements for law enforcement officers and full-time firefighters. This legislation also caps the number of times worker's compensation may be received for PTSD for the latter list of employees to three times.

Status of Bills with League Lobbying Positions

- **Senate Bill (SB) 128 / Assembly Bill (AB) 131: Programs and Policies to Address PFAS** - Sen. Wimberger (R-Oconto) and Reps. Mursau (R-Crivitz) and Swearingen (R-Rhineland) - Similar to a bill supported by the League last session after working with the authors on an amendment to address municipal concerns, this legislation would exempt municipalities and certain other parties from liability for PFAS remediation under certain circumstances and conditions. The legislation also establishes a Municipal PFAS Grant Program to assist with capital and operational costs related to PFAS, exempts certain emergency water utility actions to address PFAS from Public Service Commission of Wisconsin approvals, and establishes other programs and policies related to PFAS. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status*: The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs.
 - *Assembly Status*: The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Environment.
- **SB 127 / AB 130: Liability Exemptions for PFAS Contamination** - Sen. Wimberger (R-Oconto) and Reps. Mursau (R-Crivitz) and Swearingen (R-Rhineland) - This legislation mimics a portion of SB 128 relating to liability exemptions for PFAS remediation. This legislation, and the legislation above, would exempt farmers and other parties who spread PFAS-contaminated biosolids on a property, fire departments and airports that used PFAS-containing firefighting foam, landfills that accepted PFAS-laden waste, and those who own property where the PFAS contamination is present but didn't originate from liability. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status*: The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs.
 - *Assembly Status*: The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Environment.
- **SB 113 / AB 118: Transition to Grazing Pilot Program** - Sens. James (R-Thorp) and Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Reps. Novak (R-Dodgeville) and Tranel (R-Cuba City) - This legislation establishes a Transition to Grazing Pilot Program at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection to provide support and grants farmers who are implementing livestock forage-based managed grazing systems. Grants of up to \$40,000 are available per project. The League is engaged in this legislation due to its potential to reduce nonpoint source water pollution in waterways throughout the state, including those running through Wisconsin cities and villages. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status* **(RECENT ACTION)**: The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Revenue held a public hearing on this bill on Thursday, April 3.
 - *Assembly Status* **(RECENT ACTION)**: The Assembly Committee on Agriculture held a public hearing on this bill on Tuesday, April 8.
- **SB 105 / AB 138: Rehiring of WRS Annuitants** - Sens. Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) and Hutton (R-Brookfield) and Reps. Donovan (R-Greenfield) and Goeben (R-Hobart) - Under current law, if a person is receiving an annuity from the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), they must suspend that annuity to be rehired by a WRS participating employer. This legislation allows the annuitant to be rehired without suspending their annuity if they separate from employment for at least 75 days, did not have an employment agreement upon retirement, elect not to become a WRS participating employee, and were serving in a protective occupation (i.e., law enforcement officers and firefighters) or were a county jailer prior to retirement. This legislation first applies

to those retiring on the effective date of the bill if it were to become law. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*

- *Senate Status* **(RECENT ACTION)**: The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety held a public hearing on this bill on Tuesday, April 1.
 - *Assembly Status*: The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs.
- **SB 96 / AB 106: Amending the EV Charging Stations Law** - Sen. Marklein (R-Spring Green) and Rep. VanderMeer (R-Tomah) - This legislation makes a technical correction to last session's electric vehicle (EV) charging stations law which the League supported. Specifically, an oversight in the bill passed last session exempted the EV charging station tax of 3 cents per kilowatt-hour for Level 3 fast chargers placed at a residence but allowed the tax for slower chargers. This legislation exempts the tax collection from all EV charging stations placed at a residence. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status*: The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Utilities and Tourism.
 - *Assembly Status*: The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities.
- **SB 64 / AB 61: Penalties for Harm to Police and Fire Dogs** - Sen. Wanggaard (R-Racine) and Rep. Nedweski (R-Pleasant Prairie) - This legislation increases the criminal penalties associated with injuring or killing any animal used by a law enforcement department or fire department to perform official duties. Penalties for actions taken resulting in injury to the animal are raised from a Class I to a Class H Felony, and actions taken resulting in the death of the animal are raised from a Class H to a Class G Felony. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status* **(RECENT ACTION)**: The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety held a public hearing on this bill on Tuesday, April 1.
 - *Assembly Status*: The full Assembly passed the legislation on a voice vote on March 13.
- **SB 44 / AB 42: Prohibiting Chicken and Quail Bans** - Sen. Cabral-Guevara (R-Appleton) and Rep. Sortwell (R-Two Rivers) - This legislation prohibits cities, villages, towns, counties, and sewerage districts from prohibiting an owner or certain lessees of residential property from keeping four or fewer chickens or quail. While municipal officials could not prohibit what's often referred to as 'backyard chickens,' the proposal would allow local governments to require permits, require notification of adjacent landowners, impose regulations on fowl housing, prohibit the keeping of roosters, and impose cleanliness standards. *The League has registered **against** this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status*: The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government.
 - *Assembly Status*: The Assembly Committee on Local Government held a public hearing on this bill on Wednesday, March 19.
- **SB 37 / AB 41: Prohibiting Local Regulation of Gardens** - Sen. Jacque (R-New Franken) and Rep. Sortwell (R-Two Rivers) - This legislation prohibits cities, villages, towns, and counties from requiring a permit for or prohibiting the cultivation of vegetable or flower gardens on property not owned by the local government. Municipal officials would retain the power to control the spread of noxious weeds or invasive species. *The League has registered **against** this legislation.*

- *Senate Status:* The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government.
 - *Assembly Status:* The Assembly Committee on Local Government held a public hearing on this bill on Wednesday, March 19.
- **SB 34 / AB 35: Allowing Candidates for Certain Offices to Withdrawal Candidacy** - Sen. Wanggaard (R-Racine) and Rep. Steffen (R-Howard) - This legislation allows independent candidates for president and vice president and candidates for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, governor and lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, the state senate, and the state assembly to withdrawal their candidacy at certain timelines prescribed in the bill. These deadlines include before June 10th preceding the partisan primary or before the 4th Tuesday in August preceding the general election, which align with the final deadlines for the state to certify and report candidates for these offices to local clerks. This bill only impacts the offices listed and does not make changes to the processes for other offices, including local elected offices. *The League has registered as **neutral** on this legislation and is working with the authors to move the withdrawal deadlines back to more easily allow clerks to meet ballot printing deadlines.*
 - *Senate Status:* The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Licensing, Regulatory Reform, State and Federal Affairs.
 - *Assembly Status* **(RECENT ACTION)**: The Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections held a public hearing on this bill on Tuesday, April 8.
- **SB 26 / AB 21: Technical College Facility Lease to Childcare Centers** - Sen. Feyen (R-Fond Du Lac) and Rep. O'Connor (R-Fond Du Lac) - Under current law, technical colleges may rent unneeded space in their facilities to other entities. However, since 1999, they may not rent space to others for school purposes. This legislation creates an exemption to that prohibition for the lease of technical college facilities to childcare centers. With 52 campuses across the state, this legislation could be one tool in the toolbox that helps to address the shortage of childcare slots in Wisconsin. *The League has registered **in-favor** of this legislation.*
 - *Senate Status:* The Senate Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse Prevention, Children and Families recommended the bill for passage on a 5-0 vote on February 13.
 - *Assembly Status:* The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities held a public hearing on the bill on February 20.