

Speaker Robin Vos: WHA's Advocacy "Never More Important Than This Next Session"

Looking beyond the Nov. 8 elections and toward the 2023-2025 legislative session, Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) engaged in a dialogue with the WHA Board of Directors on Oct. 27 on potential political dynamics in the state capitol and priority issues facing hospitals during the upcoming legislative session.



Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos joins WHA's Oct. 27 board meeting virtually.

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding introduced Vos with praise of his leadership on key issues. Among several partnerships with the Speaker over the last decade, Borgerding highlighted the Speaker's support on creating, improving, and sustaining the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital program, reforming Wisconsin's hospital regulations, and passing legislation through the Speaker's Task Force on Mental Health harmonizing Wisconsin's mental health records law with HIPAA.

Borgerding specifically recognized the leadership of Speaker Vos, alongside his counterpart in the Legislature's other house, Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) in authoring and shepherding legislation at the end of this past session making threats of violence against a health care worker a Class H felony in Wisconsin.

Following opening commentary on the 2022 elections and political dynamics, Vos took a variety of questions from board members on a range of policy issues, including licensure delays, recruiting health care workers, long-term care, and Wisconsin's tort environment. Vos expressed willingness to work with WHA on these issues and solutions the legislature can be part of, but said educating new, incoming legislators will be important.

"Engage with your local legislators, especially the freshmen who are new, and probably new to health care issues. Bring them into the hospital and talk with them—educate them on the issues so they can understand the real impact of what you do and what would happen if hospitals are ill-funded," said Vos.

Vos concluded with gratitude to WHA and its members for its ongoing partnership.

“Over the years, we have worked through several issues. I appreciate what WHA does, and you will never be more important than this next session,” said Vos. “I look forward to the next session, working with WHA to educate new, incoming legislators, engaging with them on health care issues that matter, and getting some things over the finish line,” Vos continued.

WHA Updates Board on 2022 Goals, Finances, and Strategic Plan

In his President’s Report, Borgerding provided a year-to-date update on WHA’s annual goals, pointing out key areas of focus, including targeted solutions to post-acute care and advances in reimbursement for behavioral health expanding access to care. He concluded his report with a brief discussion on advocacy preparations for the next legislative session.



WHA Board of Directors meeting, Oct. 27, 2022.

WHA Senior Vice President of Finance and COO Brian Potter walked through 2022 budget and year-end projections. Potter presented the proposed Association budget for 2023, which was then approved by the board.

State and Federal Update

WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O’Brien and Vice President of Federal and State Relations Jon Hoelter discussed the state and federal political landscape. O’Brien presented on the status of key legislative races across the state and discussed various scenarios for the upcoming legislative session pending the outcome of the election.

Hoelter reminded board members that Congress will need to take up a funding package by Dec. 16 to avoid a government shutdown. That package should include WHA priorities like funding for Medicare-Dependent and Low-Volume adjustment hospitals, but it is too soon to tell whether it will become a larger package that would include other health care priorities. It is also possible that Congress could decide to pass a short-term stopgap funding bill and punt decisions on a larger package to the next session of Congress in 2023. Congress will also need to raise the debt ceiling in 2023, and this could become a major partisan battle that presents both opportunities for funding but also threats for cuts to federal programs.

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