Assembly to Take up Bucks Legislation

After last week’s passing vote in the Senate, the Bucks arena bill is off to the Assembly. The bill is set to be taken up on Tuesday, July 28th, but some are concerned that there are still changes to come. Now including a controversial $2 ticket surcharge and a change in debt collection for the county, the bill may be altered from the newly passed Senate version to ensure votes.

The surcharge will bring in an additional $2 million per year with 75%, 1.5 million, going to the Wisconsin Center District to help fund the new arena as well as the Wisconsin Center convention hall, the Milwaukee Theater, and the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena. The remaining 25% would go to the state to assist in paying down the $4 million contribution to the new arena’s construction debt.

As for the County of Milwaukee, an amendment to the bill left them on the hook for only $4 million instead of the proposed $80 million. The change came from Senator Larson (D - Milwaukee) who found the amount too large and felt it put pressure on the backs of people who are already struggling. Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive, disagreed severely with the change. Instead of collecting back taxes from Milwaukee residents, they will now be forced to fill a $4 million dollar hole without their original plan. Though Abele is concerned about the gap in the budget, members of the county believe he made a bad deal to begin with, promising $80 million, and now they are left with an even more difficult situation.

The bill as it stands would see the Bucks contributing $250 million while the state gave $55 million, Milwaukee County will give $55 million (with $51 million coming from back tax collection ran by the state), City of Milwaukee will give $47 million and the Center District will contribute $93 million.

There has been no official word on if the Assembly will change the bill when they take it up this Tuesday.

Governor Walker is running for President

After months of rumors, Governor Walker took the stage on July 13th in Waukesha to announce his bid for President. The newly declared GOP candidate will become one of sixteen people hoping to win the Republican Nomination in 2016.

Standing on the back of his accomplishments in Wisconsin, Walker stated “We need new, fresh leadership, leadership with big, bold ideas from outside of Washington….The kind of leadership that knows how to get things done, like we’ve
done here in Wisconsin.” Walker continued on by touting the success of Act 10 and his recall victory in 2010.

Walker, who currently trails behind his competition in foreign affairs experience, focused his speech on fixing the crisis abroad. He vowed to protect the people from ISIS stating, “The U.S. needs a foreign policy that will put steel in front of our enemies.” In addition, he said he believes in giving a majority of powers back to the states in a bid to reduce federal Government, claiming states do it better when it comes to Medicaid, education, transportation, and workforce development.

In the latest polls from Public Policy Polling, Walker is second, only trailing by 2% behind Donald Trump, with 17% of the vote. Following close behind is Jeb Bush with 12%, Ben Carson and Marco Rubio with 10%, and Mike Hucakbee with 8%. The rest of the candidates are tied with less than 4% of the predicted vote.

As for Walker’s possible Democrat competition, former Secretary Hilary Clinton continues to lead the Democrats with 57% of the vote, a distant front runner to her running mates. Bernie Sanders, quickly becoming a possible front runner, lags behind with 22%.

**New Senator Elected in the 33rd**

Tuesday, July 21st, marked the special election for the 33rd Senate seat in Wisconsin. With an overwhelming 72% of the vote, Rep. Chris Kapenga was elected to the seat formerly held by Senator Paul Farrow.

Kapenga focused his race on his past achievements in the State Assembly as well as the major issues being debated in the state legislature. He promoted his advocacy for the previously passed right-to-work legislation as well as his support for a full repeal of prevailing wage.

Senator Kapenga’s win was not the only news the night of the election. This race marked the first time voters were required to show their photo ID at the polls. The clerks did not report any problems stating it has been common for people to come in with their IDs ready and only one person was sent home to retrieve theirs.

The election of Kapenga to the Senate will now trigger another special election to fill his vacant seat in the State Assembly. At this time, no one has declared their candidacy for the 99th Assembly Seat nor have dates been set.