**A bill to keep the Milwaukee Brewers in Wisconsin gains bipartisan support on path to becoming law**

By WisPolitics.com

A lot of pundits and political observers focus on the conflict and controversy at the Capitol.

And a lot of that focus is newsworthy and important such as the debate between the Republican Legislature and Dem Gov. Tony Evers on gubernatorial appointments, spending priorities, tax cuts, and
managing UW-Madison and the Universities of Wisconsin.

But the political community in Wisconsin can look at some major, bipartisan accomplishments this year, too, such as big changes to shared revenue for local government and a deal to keep the Milwaukee
Brewers in Wisconsin.

Let's focus on the Brewers ballpark maintenance bill.

Evers recently signed legislation that will put more than $500 million in taxpayer money toward upkeep at the Brewers' American Family Field through 2050, saying it will allow a generation of Wisconsinites to
grow up rooting for the state’s baseball team like he did.

During a signing ceremony at the ballpark, Evers recalled meeting Hank Aaron while he was a Cub Scout and watching Warren Spahn win his 300th game at old County Stadium in 1961. Evers was 9 years old at the time when Spahn was a member of the Milwaukee Braves.

Evers said the team has been an essential part of the culture and identity of Milwaukee and the state, as well as part of their success by generating billions in annual economic impact and providing family-supporting jobs.

“Losing this team would’ve had a ripple effect felt by families and communities across the state, even far beyond Milwaukee and southeastern Wisconsin,” Evers said.

Under the deal, the state is scheduled to commit $365.8 million to maintenance through 2050, while Milwaukee County and the city will kick in $135 million combined. The package also includes a ticket tax
for non-Brewers events that will increase twice over the life of the 27-year deal with that money helping to offset the state’s commitment.

The bill also puts in place a new board that will oversee the stadium and negotiate a new lease and non-relocation agreement with the team. It includes six appointments each for the governor and the two
majority party leaders in the Legislature. Evers' picks include two spots reserved for people nominated by Milwaukee County and the city.

The team will get the 13th spot. It will send Evers a list of at least three names from which to pick that final appointment.

Once those are in place, the state will pay $35.8 million to the district for maintenance costs. It also will pay another $25 million to winterize the facility before the annual payments kick in next year.

Until a majority of the new board members are in place, Evers Administration Secretary Kathy Blumenfeld or her designee will approve regular disbursements of the district.

Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce President Tim Sheehy has been serving as chair of the outgoing board.

He said it was remarkable that the smallest market in Major League Baseball has found a way to maintain the stadium through 2050 rather than building a new one.

American Family Field opened in 2001 after the Legislature approved a five-county sales tax to help fund construction in 1995.

By comparison, the Atlanta Braves replaced a stadium that opened in 1997 with a new one in 2017 and the Texas Rangers did the same in 2020 for a park that opened in 1994.

“The Vegas odds would’ve been 99-to-1 that we would be at this point talking about a new stadium” in Milwaukee, he said.

State Sen. Chris Larson, D-Milwaukee, has been a fierce critic of the deal and has continued the criticism. He bemoaned in a post on X about the “frenzied rush to give away $500 million of your money.’’ He noted the current lease wasn’t up until 2030 and pointed out the lease with the Baltimore Orioles expires at the end of December and negotiations are still ongoing between the team and the state.

According to Baltimore media, the holdup on that deal includes the team’s resistance to signing a long-term lease without development rights at the stadium complex.

“If only we hadn’t swung at every wild pitch…” Larson wrote.

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