******

 **Advocacy Digest | April 22, 2021**

 **Brad Boycks, Executive Director**

**Rep. Jagler Elected to State Senate**

On Tuesday, April 6, State Representative and Assembly Housing and Real Estate Committee Chair John Jagler won a special election to serve out the remaining two years on now Congressman Scott Fitzgerald’s term. Jagler received 51.2% of votes to Democrat Melissa Winkler’s 43.8%- and third-party candidate Spencer Zimmerman’s 4.6%.

Jagler is expected to be seated in his new position the week of April 19 and is likely to be named the chair of the Senate Committee on Housing, Commerce, and Trade.

WBA was instrumental in supporting Jagler’s campaign in the primary and general election, working to send him over $6,000 in contributions and holding a member only event for his election via Zoom earlier in the year.

We look forward to working with Senator Jagler in the State Senate.

**Hearing Held on Occupancy Permit Bill**

Recently, the Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development held a public hearing on [Senate Bill 254](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2021/related/proposals/sb254.pdf) (SB 254) to make sure homes that proceeded through the construction process where some inspections were waved did not receive negative black marks on the occupancy permit were vetoed earlier this session when included in a larger pandemic bill. WBA testified in favor of SB 254.

SB 254 also contains a provision that would allow permittees to extend certain permits issued by the Department of Safety and Professional Services, Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Transportation by 36 months.

WBA is working with Senator Dan Feyen, the bill author, on an amendment to clarify the language in SB 254 regarding inspections to make it more consistent with the process and procedures spelled out in administrative rules.

Finally, WBA will be working with the soon to be new chair of the Assembly Housing and Real Estate committee to also schedule a public hearing on the companion bill in the lower house, [Assembly Bill 247](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2021/proposals/ab247).

**WBA to Support Additional Broadband Funding in State Budget**

After recently surveying members, WBA found that most support additional funding in the upcoming state budget to expand broadband to rural areas of the state. Additional broadband funding and support for additional funding for K-12 public education are two areas that GOP leaders in the legislature and Governor Tony Evers have both publicly stated they support.

**Building Multifamily Housing Using the Uniform Dwelling Code (w/ no sprinkler requirement)**

WBA was recently made aware of guidance documents provided by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services that serve as a “how to” guide to build multifamily units and follow the Unform Dwelling Code (UDC). Generally, multifamily units with three or more units are built under the commercial building and now, again, require sprinkler systems.

Click here for the [UDC vs, IBC document](https://mcusercontent.com/4b652b5dc1419566a54a97e7a/files/c8c25161-0308-472b-acfc-96680a809b6a/R2_Multi_Family_Const._UDC_vs_IBC_Scope.pdf) and here for more the [“separation detail” plan](https://mcusercontent.com/4b652b5dc1419566a54a97e7a/files/dd613cea-2d73-4b53-b5f0-e6256e94d86d/UDC_IBC_SEPARATION_DETAIL.pdf).

**Thirty Five Percent Increase in New Home Construction**

The latest single-housing permit numbers show that new home construction is up thirty five percent in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the first quarter of 2020. Compiled by the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), the data is required to be submitted to DSPS by all municipalities in the state.

Between January 1, 2021 and March 31, 2021, 2,626 new home permits were pulled in Wisconsin compared to 1,941 permits during the same time period in 2020, an increase of 35 percent. This news comes after a 10 percent increase in new home construction in all of 2020 compared to 2019.

“While we have heard from our members that business has been strong, these numbers are greater than even we anticipated given the rising cost of building materials and quarter one occurring during winter months,” said Wisconsin Builders Association (WBA) Executive Director Brad Boycks.

Other encouraging data has been released by the Department of Administration. In the first quarter of 2021, 67 plats and 1,404 lots were approved. These numbers are on track to surpass last year’s, as there were 201 plats and 5,340 lots approved in all of 2020.

“Historically low interest rates and a low inventory of existing homes have been huge factors in the number of new home building and remodeling projects,” said WBA President Abe Degnan. “While we need to see the cost of building materials come down as they are not sustainable for the industry, we are pleased they haven’t hindered the volume of overall homebuilding thus far.”

**From NAHB: Bringing Housing Home: Rising Lumber Prices Tops the Agenda**

In less than two weeks NAHB members across the land will have an opportunity to meet face-to-face with federal lawmakers or in a virtual format to discuss critical issues confronting our industry, including soaring lumber prices and supply shortages that are driving up housing costs.

Bringing Housing Home®, the premier grassroots event of the year, will take place during the week of May 3. Every NAHB member is encouraged to meet with U.S. representatives and senators in their home districts. These meetings are key to strengthening relationships with lawmakers and keeping the housing industry as a priority in Congress. State and local home builder association executive leaders are encouraged to choose the meeting style that suits their local association and follow COVID-19 guidelines and protocols.

Access the NAHB Legislative Priorities brochure to learn about the key issues, other than the top priority of rising lumber prices, to discuss at these meetings. Lawmakers are also being urged to take action to:

* Reform the nation’s housing finance system
* Strengthen the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
* Prevent federal intrusion into the energy codes development process
* Create a national flood insurance program that is predictable and affordable
* Craft an infrastructure package that takes housing affordability concerns into account
* Invest in federal vocational job training programs