



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Rep. Kitchens votes to end enhanced federal UI benefits

MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay, joined a number of his Assembly colleagues today in passing a bill that requires the governor’s administration to end the state’s participation in the enhanced federal unemployment benefit program.

“I have heard from numerous businesses in my district that are having a difficult time finding employees and, as a result, cannot adequately serve their customers,” Rep. Kitchens said. “While several factors may be playing a role in our state’s significant labor shortage, terminating our involvement in the federal unemployment program will give us the most effective and quickest outcomes.”

The federal supplement is providing an additional \$300 per week on top of state benefits. Because the federal payments are not taxed, those receiving the full unemployment benefit are currently making the equivalent of more than \$22 per hour.

“I am sympathetic to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for our state, but it is evident that, with the help of the vaccine, we are finally turning the corner,” Rep. Kitchens said. “Instead of implementing or continuing programs that discourage people from working, we need to find ways to improve workforce participation so we can adequately address our labor shortage and grow our economy.”

Assembly Bill 336 also ensures that individuals who file for unemployment are actively searching for a job to be eligible to collect benefits. The governor waived that requirement last year through an emergency rule.

If the bill is signed by the governor, Wisconsin would join at least 25 other states in ending participation in the federal program.

According to an SR Poll Results report, 71 percent of voters favor ending the enhanced federal unemployment payments. That includes 67 percent of independents and 59 percent of Democrats.

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