



November 10, 2009

Senate Democrats unveil state job proposal to mixed reviews

The Associated Press

MADISON -- Democrats who control the Wisconsin state Senate on Monday unveiled a proposal they say will help create and retain jobs and businesses and improve worker education and training.

One part of the proposal would spend \$2 million to increase partnerships between businesses and the University of Wisconsin. It also would increase tax credits for those who invest in startup companies and create a new tax credit for businesses that pay university or technical college tuition for their low-income employees.

Economists offered mixed reactions to the proposals, and Republicans say Democrats are simply paying lip service to the idea of helping the economy.

Martin Regalia, chief economist with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who spoke in Wausau on Monday, said in general using the tax code to "incentivize" job creation and training is helpful. Without studying Wisconsin or the latest proposals specifically, though, Regalia said he couldn't evaluate how effective Democrats' plans could be.

Dave Eckmann, economic development director with the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce, also said the proposals could be helpful. But he said many small businesses likely would be unable to do such things as send low-income workers to school. Tax credits that more specifically addressed small-business needs, and a lower overall tax burden in the state, would be more helpful, he said.

"I'll tell you what, small business right now is just hanging on by a thread," Eckmann said.

State Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker, D-Weston, could not be reached for comment by the Wausau Daily Herald on Monday. The Legislature is done meeting for the year but is scheduled to return in mid-January.

-- Wausau Daily Herald reporter Brian Reisinger contributed to this story.
