



Wisconsin State Legislature

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Manufacturing: An Important Part of Wisconsin's Economy

Wisconsin has a strong history as a manufacturing state. Beer, cheese, engines and motorcycles all come to mind when we think of things made in Wisconsin. The state's manufacturing sector goes well beyond those staples and includes a wide range of products, from nutritional supplements to archery equipment and bioscience advancements. With over 9,500 manufacturing employers, Wisconsin ranks second in the nation for manufacturing jobs, behind only Indiana, with 16.4 percent of Wisconsin workers working in manufacturing. More than 467,000 workers are employed in the manufacturing sector, accounting for 19 percent of gross domestic product. These workers contribute over \$57 billion to Wisconsin's economy. What's more, manufacturing jobs in Wisconsin pay well. In fact, the average pay for a manufacturing worker in Wisconsin is \$55,000 per year, \$10,000 per year higher than the average pay for Wisconsin private-sector workers.

October was Manufacturing Month in Wisconsin. As we head into November, here are a few Wisconsin companies continuing the state's strong manufacturing history:

- A company in Madison, Quincy Bioscience, is using a protein found in jellyfish to create products to fight dementia-like mental illness and improve cognitive function. Their most popular product, Prevagen, is sold at Walgreens and health food stores.
- The next time you see a pre-teen wearing braces, you are likely looking at another product made in Wisconsin. American Orthodontics, located in Sheboygan County is the world's largest privately-owned manufacturer of orthodontic appliances. While they have 600 employees worldwide, 95 percent of their products are manufactured in Sheboygan.

- When you check the oil in your car, you are likely using another Wisconsin product. Dictken Masch Plastics is a leading manufacturer of dipsticks, officially known as fluid level indicators. In the 1940s, the company began making custom thermostat components for small appliances and electronics. They expanded into thermoplastic molding and now employ 520 employees.
- Another medical innovation helping people lead healthy, productive lives is also made right here in Wisconsin. Solaris, located in West Allis, is a leading manufacturer of medical garments that help people who suffer from lymphedema and other venous diseases. Lymphedema is swelling that is caused by lymph accumulating in tissue. Some breast cancer survivors struggle with lymphedema for years after treatment and rely on companies like Solaris to provide supportive medical equipment.

Companies like these rely on skilled workers to produce their products. The Wisconsin Fast Forward program awards grants to public and private organizations to create and implement workforce training programs. The program provides worker training grants based on employer demand for documented skilled labor needs that are not covered by other training programs. These grants can be used to train new and existing employees. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) administers these grants and is also responsible for additional grant programs that are available for high schools. For example, the Youth Apprenticeship Program funds collaborations between Wisconsin businesses and educational institutions, like high schools and technical colleges, to support programs in which high school pupils receive classroom and on the job training. I have supported both the Wisconsin Fast Forward program and the Youth Apprenticeship program as a member of the Joint Finance Committee and in the State Senate. As Wisconsin companies continue to offer innovative products to the market, I am confident we will continue to see the need for skilled workers grow and programs such as these will help ensure a skilled workforce.

If you have any questions about any of the information I have included or if you have suggestions on other topics or issues you would like learn more about, you may call my office toll-free at (800) 991-5541; write me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; or e-mail me at: Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us. You can also sign up for our newsletter at our website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen14/news/index.htm>.

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