



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Spreitzer, Assembly Democrats Announce Economic Opportunity Agenda

Rep. Spreitzer ready to work to restore economic opportunity for Wisconsin workers, students and families

MADISON – Today Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) and the Assembly Democrats announced their Economic Opportunity Agenda, a package of legislation that will help restore economic opportunity for Wisconsin workers, students and families.

“My main focus as a representative is on restoring economic opportunity for the people of the 45th Assembly District and across Wisconsin,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “The bills my Democratic colleagues and I put forward today will help create family-supporting jobs and grow Wisconsin’s middle class. I look forward to working to advance these proposals and helping ensure they receive the strong bipartisan support they deserve.”

Among the 15 bills announced today are several initiatives that would have a significant positive impact on the 45th Assembly District, including the following:

- Raising the state minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour
- Investing in small businesses and helping them access much-needed capital
- Expanding access to rural broadband
- Creating a competitive grant training program aimed at closing the skills gap
- Fully restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income working families
- Indexing the Homestead Tax Credit for inflation to help seniors and low-income families
- Restoring full funding to the state’s farm-to-school program
- Creating a Nanotechnology Hub at the UW-Extension
- Emphasizing the need to keep jobs here rather than shipping them overseas
- Taking advantage of clean energy to grow Wisconsin jobs

“Wisconsin continues to lag behind in job and wage growth and we are facing one of the largest budget deficits in the country,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “It is imperative that we as elected officials work together to ensure better opportunities for our citizens. This is the agenda the people of Wisconsin have told us they want and I am ready to fight for their top priorities – good jobs, better wages and long-term economic security.”

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Assembly Democrats – Economic Opportunity Agenda

Entrepreneurial Assistance Grant Program

Noting that research, initiative, and human resources are essential to creating a new small business and our colleges and universities are rich with bright, young individuals who are looking forward to real world experience, this bill creates grants through WEDC that would go to businesses that have been recently founded for the purpose of facilitating paid internships for business and business-related students. It also provides grants directly to a college or university that is providing and guiding groups of interns working with three or more companies for the cost of the professor overseeing the work of the interns, guiding research, and developing any necessary assistance to successfully implement the program.

Create a Nanotechnology Hub

The “Wisconsin Idea” comes from our history of fostering the technological breakthroughs pioneered at our universities and making the best scientific information available to our citizens. Nanotechnology, covering diverse scientific fields like molecular biology, organic chemistry, semiconductor physics, and computer chip microfabrication, is an example of the type of cutting edge scientific research currently being explored. This proposal creates a Nanotechnology Hub at the UW-Extension to further exploration in this field and promote the development of nanotechnology businesses in our state. It can provide information and resources to guide the commercialization of the state’s best research. It also creates a Nanotechnology Council to set policies and priorities for the nanotechnology hub and to develop plans for the hub to sustain its own funding.

Rural Broadband Expansion

Provides greater access to grants for public schools, technical schools and libraries to get them expanded access to broadband internet in underserved areas to ensure they can compete in a 21st Century global economy.

Increase the minimum wage to \$10.10

To lift hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin workers out of poverty, this proposal raises Wisconsin’s minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour in three increments, and indexes the minimum wage to inflation. It is estimated that raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour will benefit more than 600,000 Wisconsin workers.

Refundable Angel and Early Stage Seed Investment Credits

Makes investing in high-tech start-ups and entrepreneurs from Wisconsin appealing to investors across the nation and around the world by offering a tax refund to investors. It makes both the angel and early stage seed investment tax credits refundable if the amount of credit owed to the investor exceeds their Wisconsin tax liability. (The proposal was also included as SSAB 15/SSSB 15 on Gov. Walker’s Fall 2011 Call for Special Session, but Republicans in the Assembly and Senate refused to act on the bill.)

Index the Homestead Tax Credit

The Homestead Credit is a property tax and renter's refund that benefits low income families and the elderly on fixed incomes. This proposal restores indexing of this program to ensure the credit keeps up with inflation.

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Made in America

The Made in America Act requires state and local units of government to give preference to U.S.-made products when purchasing materials. It builds on Wisconsin Democrats' earlier effort, the American Jobs Act, which prohibits the state from spending tax dollars on services overseas. It's also a response to the disturbing new trend of states purchasing prefabricated bridges and building materials from China.

Fund Farm-to-School Grants

The state's farm-to-school program connects schools with locally grown foods, provides nutrition and agricultural education, and improves the incomes of farmers. However, the Republicans cut funding to this in the 2013-15 budget. This proposal restores full funding to this program.

Restore the Earned Income Tax Credit

Economists on both side of the aisle agree that the Earned Income Tax Credit is one of the most effective ways to boost the income of working citizens. This proposal restores the cut made to the program by Republicans, and extends the Earned Income Tax Credit to individuals.

Create a Clean Energy Jobs Task Force

Opportunities around clean and renewable energy present some of the greatest possibilities for long-term job creation in our state. There are numerous areas where new science and technology are developing and our state could be positioned to take advantage and be a leader. This proposal will create a legislative task force to partner with stakeholders including the utilities, scientific experts, innovative businesses, building trades representatives, and local communities to take testimony to better understand how our state can control energy costs and grow Wisconsin jobs, while being better stewards of our environment.

Workforce Growth 2.0

Creates a competitive grant training program based on the needs of Wisconsin businesses aimed at closing the skills gap facing our state. The proposal also provides for a dual enrollment pilot program between K-12 schools and technical colleges and creates an innovation grant program for faculty, staff, and students to apply for grants for commercialization activities for technical college-developed products and processes. Finally, the bill creates Veteran Success Grants to reach out to veterans, assist them in exploring career options, and provide veterans training for employment or higher education.

Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer Matching Grants Program

To build on the successful federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, this proposal would create a competitive state matching program for Wisconsin small businesses awarded federal SBIR or STTR grants through the Small Business Administration.

Buy Wisconsin

To ensure we are relying on our local businesses, this proposal requires the state to attempt to purchase at least 20% of materials and contractual services from Wisconsin-based businesses. The bill also sets a goal that at least 20% of products and services purchased by local governments be from Wisconsin-based businesses, as well as a goal that local governments not purchase less from state-based businesses than the prior year.

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Small Business Tax Credit Now

Helps small businesses take advantage of existing tax credits for business investments by offering them up front as a grant. This bill will make state tax credits work for small businesses. (The proposal was also included as SSAB 16/SSSB 16 in Gov. Walker's Fall 2011 Call for Special Session, but Republicans in the Assembly and Senate refused to act on the bill.)

Wisconsin Food First Bill

The University of Wisconsin System purchases millions of dollars' worth of food each year for their facilities around the state, including campus dormitories, student unions, and sports facilities. This proposal modifies the UW System's purchasing process to allow for extra consideration to be given to locally produced food, rather than the lowest bidder.

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