



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

November 5, 2015

Speaker Robin Vos
Room 211 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708
(HAND DELIVERED)

Speaker Vos,

In light of your decision to convene an extraordinary session of the legislature, we write today to request that you use this session to take immediate action on significant jobs-related legislation.

Following this week's announcement that Oscar Mayer is closing its plant in Madison and laying off more than 1,000 workers – and with Wisconsin stalled at 34th in the nation in private-sector job growth, dead last in new business start-ups and with a middle class shrinking faster than any other state – it is imperative that we focus our attention squarely on growing jobs in our state.

However, as you have indicated, your plan for the upcoming extraordinary session is to focus not on jobs, significant economic development or any other issues that represent the top priorities of the people of Wisconsin, but on eliminating our nonpartisan government watchdog, allowing more money in politics, enabling more corporate influence over our government and less disclosure. We believe our citizens would be far better served if we instead worked together on meaningful jobs bills.

Earlier this year, Assembly Democrats put forward “15 Bills for 2015,” an Economic Opportunity Agenda designed to help create good-paying jobs, connect workers with available jobs and increase wages. In addition, we have introduced a “Bring Back the Middle Class” package that includes much-needed student loan debt relief and would ensure more affordable childcare opportunities for Wisconsin families.

None of these bills has received a committee vote or even a public hearing. We ask that you work with us by adding the following proposals, as well as any other meaningful economic development initiatives, to your call for an extraordinary session:

Entrepreneurial Assistance Grant Program – Assembly Bill 103

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 – Assembly Bill 104

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 – Assembly Bill 63

This bill 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.

Refundable Angel and Early Stage Seed Investment Credits – Assembly Bill 102

This bill 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 no action was taken at that time.

Index the Homestead Tax Credit – Assembly Bill 85

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.

Made in America – Assembly Bill 20

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 – Assembly Bill 89

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 Assembly Bill 84

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 – Assembly Bill 17

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 – Assembly Bill 86

This bill 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 – Assembly Bill 145

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 – Assembly Bill 87

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.

Small Business Tax Credit Now – Assembly Bill 62

This bill 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 no action was taken at that time.

Higher Ed, Lower Debt – Assembly Bill 272

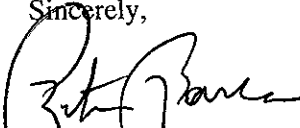



At least 815,000 Wisconsinites are carrying student loan debt, with an average of more than \$28,000 owed. Total student debt in Wisconsin is over \$19 billion. Under this legislation, Wisconsin’s student loan borrowers will be able to refinance their student loans like a car or mortgage. The typical Wisconsin student loan borrower would receive \$179 in annual tax savings, and some would receive as much as \$531 in annual savings.

Childcare Affordability – Assembly Bill 399

Wisconsin was recently ranked as one of the 10 least affordable states for full-time infant care and full-time 4-year old care by Child Care Aware of America. The annual cost of infant care in Wisconsin is \$10,775. This bill would provide much-needed relief for middle-class families by creating a nonrefundable individual income tax credit based on the federal tax credit for expenses for household and dependent care services.

Creating good-paying jobs and strengthening our economy remain primary concerns for middle-class families across this state, and we know that members of both our caucuses agree on the need for more jobs in Wisconsin. If you are sincere about “wiping the slate clean,” as you stated on the Assembly floor this week, and working in a bipartisan manner on the important issues facing our state, you will join us in taking immediate action to help create jobs for hardworking Wisconsin families by putting these bills on the extraordinary session calendar.

Sincerely,

			
PETER W. BARCA Assembly Minority Leader 64 th Assembly District	KATRINA SHANKLAND Asst. Minority Leader 71 st Assembly District	ANDY JORGENSEN Minority Caucus Chair 43 rd Assembly District	JOCASTA ZAMARRIPA Asst. Minority Caucus Chair 8 th Assembly District