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Wisconsin School of Business
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Together Forward®
We Make Things in Wisconsin

By Nick Novak  
WMC Director of Communications & Marketing

For every five dollars of economic output created in Wisconsin, one dollar of it comes from manufacturing. We are a state that was built on this industry, and it continues to lead us into the future. Not only is 18 percent of Wisconsin’s GDP from manufacturing, many of the other jobs in the state—bankers, mechanics, construction workers, doctors and countless others—are created thanks to a strong manufacturing base.

This is especially true in rural towns and villages that are home to manufacturers. Without the local manufacturer, many other businesses would not exist because the money being generated by the manufacturer wouldn’t exist.

This is known as the multiplier effect. When a manufacturer employs 100 people, another 340 jobs are created in other industries, according to the National Association of Manufacturers. In addition to creating other jobs, there is more value creation—and by that I mean cold, hard cash. Manufacturing has the largest multiplier effect of any other industry when it comes to economic output. For every $100 of effect of any other industry when it comes to economic output. For every $100 of

Another way to show off the great things made in Wisconsin is through WMC’s Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin contest, presented by Johnson Financial Group. Last year, Wisconsinites cast nearly 200,000 votes in deciding the Oshkosh Corporation Joint Light Tactical Vehicle was the Coolest Thing made in our state.

This was after an exciting bracket-style tournament that we named Manufacturing Madness. The top 16 products compete head-to-head until we have a winner! Who will it be this year? Only time—and you—will tell. Nominations will be accepted starting Aug. 20, and you can read more about the contest on page 34.

So if you make something in Wisconsin, be proud of it. Create an economic impact summary and share it with your community. Host elementary and high school students at your facility this October. And get people excited about career opportunities available by showing off the cool products you make!

In Wisconsin, we make things! And I would argue, we make the coolest! ▶️

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- Processes
- Certifications
- Equipment
- Plant size
- Capacity
- And much more

Across the Country or Across the Street.

Every job is different. Sometimes the best price sets the tone. Other times, you need a local manufacturer. For every job, our unique search capabilities make it easy for you to discover the right supply chain partner for your needs. As the official marketplace of the National Association of Manufacturers and leading state manufacturing association partners, ours is the most complete marketplace in the country whether you are buying or selling.

Membership Makes Access a Breeze

Members of the NAM or Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) have unlimited access to the most complete manufacturing search engine of its kind for just $500 annually. Non-member subscription fees are $2,500 annually.

If your business is not yet a member of the NAM or WMC, please contact either one today to discuss membership.

Then you can take full advantage of exclusive membership pricing and gain complete access to the Manufacturers Marketplace.
I wrote a column for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on the eve of the November 2015 Republican Presidential Debate held in Milwaukee. The topic was what the Wisconsin business community wants to hear from the candidates for president, both Republican and Democrat (Wisconsin also hosted a debate between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders in February 2016), on major economic issues like taxes, regulations, energy, minimum wage, etc.

The column was a chance to share many of the issues that I mentioned in my column.

The signature economic reform of the Trump Administration, so far, has been the first major federal tax law rewrite since President Reagan in the 1980s. At 35 percent—higher when state taxes are factored in—the U.S. had among the highest corporate rates of any nation. At 21 percent, which is below the world-wide average of 23 percent. The long overdue reduced rate is finally in place.

Just as Obama famously used his “pen and phone” to greatly increase the power and reach of the regulatory state, Trump is using the same executive authority to roll it back. An employer leads to more hiring and wage growth. Fast forward to June 4, 2018. That day marked the 500th day in office for President Donald J. Trump, and the White House invited me (and 7,000 other people) to participate in a conference call with POTUS himself to discuss his accomplishments. By any measure, he has taken the country in a new direction by rolling back environmental regulations.

On taxes, I said the U.S. corporate rate is uncompetitive. On regulations, I chastised Obama’s anti-fossil fuel policies and the Environmental Protection Agency’s flats that threatened thousands of Wisconsin manufacturing jobs. On minimum wage and mandatory paid leave, I asked if the candidates believed that raising the costs of being an employer leads to more hiring and wage growth.

22 deregulatory actions for every new regulation. WMC specifically applauded him for reversing the unnecessary and job killing expansions to the Waters of the United States Rule and the Clean Power Plan, both of which would have directly, and adversely harmed Wisconsin’s agricultural, and manufacturing dominated economy.

And, as a former banking lobbyist who opposed the Dodd Frank Act, I am pleased to see many of its ill-advised provisions repealed, particularly the ones that punished Wisconsin’s community banks and credit unions, neither of which were guilty of the abuses that led to the Great Recession.

Trump has been equally impressive on energy, which is the lifeblood of an advanced economy. He wisely replaced Obama’s foolish “keep it in the ground” philosophy with a full embrace of American’s abundant fossil fuel deposits. He has also approved the Keystone XL and Dakota pipelines. As a result, the U.S. is now the world’s top oil producing nation, besting both Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Wisconsin also owes Trump a debt of gratitude for helping to lure Foxconn to the state. After all, it was Trump, with the help of then-White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, who suggested Foxconn founder Terry Gou should consider southeastern Wisconsin for his North American complex after POTUS visited Kenoshia.

To the great frustration of Trump’s many critics on both the political left and right, the U.S. economy is responding well to the reforms listed above. Unemployment is 3.8 percent, the lowest since April 2000. Middle class supporting manufacturing and construction jobs are booming. The stock market is strong, and consumer confidence is at a 17 year high. Further, a recent CNBC poll shows that a majority of Americans approve of Trump’s handling of the economy.

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Sen. Baldwin Blunders With Right-to-Work Repeal

By Scott Manley
WMC Senior Vice President of Government Relations

The United States was founded on the principle that all men and women are born with individual liberty, and may live their lives free from arbitrary or unjust restraint—especially from the government.

Given these principles, it is down-right un-American to use government coercion to force workers to financially support any organization against their will, including a labor union.

Yet U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin has co-authored an anti-freedom proposal that would do just that—force workers to pay dues to unions, against their will, by repealing the federal law that allows states like Wisconsin to enact right-to-work.

Senator Baldwin’s proposal is anti-worker and would harm our state economically. It is little more than an election year sop to the labor unions who write big checks to her reelection campaign.

To understand how devastating Sen. Baldwin’s proposal would be on Wisconsin and its citizens, it is important to understand the underlying economic data for right-to-work states.

WMC’s effort to enact a right-to-work law began well before Gov. Scott Walker signed Act 1 into law on March 9, 2015. We began doing the research on right-to-work states in the summer of 2014, with the hope that Gov. Walker would win his reelection, and the Senate and Assembly would have strong enough Republican majorities to get this critical reform done.

Our research taught us that states with a right-to-work law on the books had significantly stronger economic performance metrics than states without the law. Consider the following data points:

• More Job Creation. During the 10-year period from 2004-2013, right-to-work states grew 3.6 million jobs—significantly more than the 1.5 million in non-right-to-work states.
• Faster Job Growth. In that same timeframe, right-to-work states grew jobs by an average of 5.3 percent, which is more than twice the rate of forced-union states (2.1%).
• Higher Wage Growth. Right-to-work states grew wages by an average of 15.1 percent from 2003-2013, while wage growth lagged in non-right-to-work states at 8.2 percent.
• Higher Manufacturing Output. Manufacturing GDP grew by 26.1 percent in right-to-work states from 2003-2013, nearly double that of forced-union states (13.8%).
• More Disposable Income. When differences in cost-of-living variances between states are taken into account, employees in right-to-work states had per capita disposable income of $38,915 in 2013, nearly $2,000 per year more than non-right-to-work states $36,959.
• More Workers. Right-to-work states grew population by 4.9 million people in the 10-year period from 2003-2012, while non-right-to-work states lost 4.9 million people.
From an economic standpoint, becoming a right-to-work state was a no-brainer. The data consistently showed that right-to-work states performed better economically, and perhaps more importantly, had a history of attracting people to their states instead of losing them.

In 2015, WMC was already considering the following data points since Wisconsin enacted right-to-work in 2015:
• Our unemployment rate is 2.8 percent, the lowest in recorded history.
• Our economy has grown more than 140,000 jobs.
• We have added 11,700 family-supporting manufacturing jobs.
• In the first two years since right-to-work was enacted, wages in Wisconsin grew by 5.5 percent.
• Wisconsin has the fifth-highest labor force participation rate in the country, and unemployment claims are at the lowest level since 1973.
• In 2014 before right-to-work was enacted, Wisconsin lost a net 10,000 people to interstate migration. In 2017, that number was reduced to roughly 2,000. Our migration trajectory is markedly improved.
• We landed the largest direct foreign investment in United States history with the $10 billion Foxconn campus.

The data speaks for itself. Our state’s economic improvement since enacting right-to-work is undeniable. Of course there are many factors that have contributed to Wisconsin’s economic success since 2015, but right-to-work is certainly part of the reason why we have done so well.

Unfortunately, Sen. Baldwin would have us reverse course with her regressive, anti-worker and anti-freedom legislation to coerce employees to pay union dues against their will.

Sen. Baldwin’s proposal is corrosive to the principles upon which our country was founded, and takes the side of powerful and politically connected union bosses at the expense of middle class workers. You’ll hear a lot of political ads this summer and fall on the U.S. Senate race—remember this misguided legislation as an example of who Sen. Baldwin is really working for in Washington.

Wisconsin Fast Forward is now accepting Worker Training Grant applications for ALL industries!

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Keep Your Success Moving Forward!
Winning on Talent

By Chris Reader
WMC Director of Health & Human Resources Policy

Employers in Wisconsin are struggling to find workers. That will come as no surprise to readers of Wisconsin Business Voice. It may be a surprise, however, to learn of the incredible level of attention being given by policymakers in Wisconsin towards improving the chances of Wisconsin employers to find the workers they need in order to continue to grow and thrive. Wisconsin is focused, starting with Gov. Scott Walker and lawmakers in the State Capitol and down to local officials, chambers of commerce and economic development groups because we simply must win the competition for talent development and attraction. According to surveys of WMC members, employers expect to continue hiring and growing into the future, but the lack of qualified workers looms large and threatens to halt those plans.

To fix the problem, we have to start by recognizing where we are. Wisconsin has record high employment with over three million people working in our state. We have one of the best labor participation rates in the country at 68.9 percent, compared with 62.8 percent nationally, and record unemployment at only 2.8 percent. Meanwhile, there are usually over 97,000 jobs available daily on the Job Center of Wisconsin website. While those are all good indicators that employers are growing, hiring and doing well, it is also proof that the struggle employers currently have with hiring new people is real. Bottom line, companies cannot hire if there isn’t a pool of available workers and, in Wisconsin, that pool is getting very small.

Without question, the reduction in birth rates over the last several decades coupled with baby boomer retirements has caught up to us. It’s a simple equation. Workplace automation and technologic advancements will overcome some of the demographic problem, but not all of it. Immigrants are another partial fix, but comprehensive federal reform is necessary first. That means there is great opportunity in our state for those willing to move here from around the country. For that to happen, we have to stop being Midwest nice and start bragging about what a great place Wisconsin is. Across the country, people don’t know of the many opportunities in Wisconsin for career advancement. They don’t know about our abundant natural resources, but probably only as a weekend getaway, not a place to live and raise a family.

Policymakers in Madison have approved almost $7 million to start telling our story. The state is now marketing opportunities to potential future Wisconsin residents in places like Chicago and Minneapolis. They are reaching out to UW graduates throughout the country and urging them to come home. And they are visiting military bases to recruit retiring veterans to come to Wisconsin. Beyond outreach in other states, we also have to look internally as a state and pull some people not currently in the workplace back. We need to help people on government assistance to get back into the workforce. We must ensure prison inmates are trained with employable skills so they can work upon release. Employers can look internally at how to be friendly for groups of people often difficult to employ, like people with certain disabilities, dementia or drug problems. In all of these areas, there are efforts underway by state policymakers to assist employers and regional groups to develop plans for success.

If you haven’t yet, join the effort to win the talent shortage. Give your local chamber of commerce or economic development group a call, or call WMC and get involved. Working alone, Wisconsin won’t change our trajectory. But working together we can show the world why Wisconsin continues to be the place to be—not only for employers like Amazon, Haribo and Foxconn, but for families and individuals, as well.
When making your network work takes quality and quantity.

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Join the innovative not-for-profit cooperative with the negotiating power to connect top employers to one of the region’s largest and most effective provider networks. The Alliance’s nearly 30 years of experience can help you navigate self-funded health care. Get answers. Get to know the-alliance.org.

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Legislature, Courts Rein In Local Bureaucrats

By Lucas Vebber

WMC General Counsel and Director of Environmental & Energy Policy

O nce upon a time “local control” used to mean “less control.” Oh how the times have changed. As local governments have clamored for “local control” in recent years what they have really been seeking is just that—control. What they have sought is the power to raise taxes and create new fees, put new regulations on businesses, and roll back private property rights.

Thankfully, the past several months have seen some tremendous victories for private property rights in Wisconsin in both the courts and from the legislature. While we’ve come a long way toward reining in out of control local governments and are moving in the right direction, we have more work to do.

In early June, the Wisconsin Supreme Court released an opinion in Golden Sands Dairy v. Town of Saratoga, a landmark private property rights case. In that case, the company submitted an application to build eight structures that would enable them to use the surrounding land for agricultural purposes supported by the structures. The Town of Saratoga, after the application had been filed, changed their zoning ordinances to prohibit agricultural uses on the surrounding land. The Town of Saratoga argued that the “Building Permit Rule” did not apply to that surrounding land, and that it could change the zoning. Thankfully, in a major victory for private property rights, the Wisconsin Supreme Court sided with the land owner and extended the “Building Permit Rule” to all land specifically identified in a building permit application—meaning the Town was not allowed to change the rules on the applicant.

This case is just one small piece of the ongoing effort to rein in out of control local governments. This effort has also been taken up by the legislature, which passed legislation this session aimed at pushing back on local bureaucrats. As my colleague Chris Reader has written on previously, the legislature passed 2017 Act 327 which prohibited local governments from establishing their own regulations on business—a vital reform.

Businesses like Golden Sands deserve a great deal of thanks. It is not easy to put up the kind of effort they did to take on a unit of government. However, because they were able to take on and maintain that fight, we all benefit from greater certainty and a clearer regulatory environment. Similarly, legislators who have taken up this cause, like Rep. Rob Hutton and Sen. Dave Craig who authored Act 327, deserve a great deal of recognition and thanks for the work they’ve done.

When it comes to protecting and growing private property rights, there will always be more work to do. These recent legislative and judicial victories are significant and provide momentum to keep this effort moving forward into the next legislative session.

As WMC looks to continue pushing back against new taxes and burden some new regulations at all levels of government, we need to hear from you. Our lobbying efforts are only as good as the information we can get from our members, letting us know the real world impacts of government action. Keep in touch with the WMC Government Relations team on issues impacting your business operations, and let us know if there is any way that we can help you succeed.

When making your network work takes quality and quantity.

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Smile power™
Make Property Tax Relief Permanent

Cory Fish
WMC Director of Tax, Transportation and Legal Affairs

The headline “Flat property tax has been right priority” is not what many would expect from the left-leaning Wisconsin State Journal editorial board. Yet the editorial board wrote just that stating Gov. Scott Walker has led a “largely successful effort by Republicans over time to hold down property taxes in a state that has ranked high for burdening homeowners.” The board went on to write a laudatory article praising Gov. Walker and the Republican legislature’s prioritization of property tax relief over the last seven years.

This editorial is long overdue. The governor and legislature have had the political courage to stand up to powerful interests and eliminate the state’s portion of the property tax and restrict local property tax growth. Because of this courage, a typical homeowner owes $139 dollars less a year in property taxes than eight years ago. A typical homeowner would have had to pay $3,000 more over the last seven years if the property tax hike trend had continued from the Doyle Administration. In total, property taxpayers have saved over $3 billion since Gov. Walker took office thanks to these reforms.

The Walker Administration’s record of accomplishment should be celebrated, but these reforms also need to be protected and expanded. According to a USA Today report, Wisconsin had the 10th worst average property tax burden in the nation in 2017. The Tax Foundation ranked Wisconsin the fourteenth highest state in per capita property tax burden in 2018, the highest of all our neighbors except Illinois. Regardless of who is doing the measuring, Wisconsin generally has the unenviable distinction of having one of the highest property tax burdens in the country.

Keeping this burden in check is an issue that crosses traditional partisan lines. Even after seven years of action by Gov. Walker and the Republican legislature, a poll commissioned by WMC shows a hunger for a bigger solution to Wisconsin’s property tax problem. A plurality of Wisconsin voters think property taxes are still too high (only two percent of voters think property taxes are too low) and a bi-partisan majority (71%) do not want to see property taxes raised on businesses. It is clear that voters overwhelmingly agree with Walker’s stance on property taxes.

To be fair, not quite everyone agrees. Several candidates for governor including Tony Evers, Mahlon Mitchell and Paul Soglin have all suggested partially or fully scrapping the levy limits that have kept the lid on local property tax hikes. Local government lobbyists have also argued for the authority to push larger property tax increases. It seems like some politicians and special interests are much more open to raising property taxes than voters are.

 Wisconsin needs a permanent solution to ensure that the days of double-digit percentage increases in property tax levies are truly over.

Wisconsin needs a permanent solution to ensure that the days of double-digit percentage increases in property tax levies are truly over. Wisconsinites deserve a right to property tax relief. The state constitution should be amended to make Gov. Walker’s signature property tax reform, the levy limit, permanent. This codification in the constitution of current law would ensure that tax and spend local government officials and special interests are permanently kept in check. Enacting this reform would afford property taxpayers deserved protections against massive tax increases regardless of which politicians or political parties are in power. Taxpayers, at the absolute least, deserve that much.
As the former Wing Commander for the 115th Fighter Wing, I can attest there are many things our friends and neighbors in uniform are the best in the world at, but the two areas where they struggle is highlighting their accomplishments and asking for help. So, on their behalf, I am going to do both.

2018 marks the 70th year there has been an uninterrupted Air Force mission at Truax Field in Madison. F-51 Mustangs were first stationed there in 1948. Truax went on to become the first Air National Guard base in the nation to fly a jet fighter with the F-89A in the 1950s. The 115th Fighter Wing (115 FW) transitioned to the A-10 in the 1980s and the current F-16 aircraft in 1992. The F-16s currently assigned to the 115 FW are “fourth generation” fighter aircraft, the oldest operational F-16 in the Air Force. They are expected to be retired in the 2020s. The F-35A is the Air Force’s replacement for the F-16 and is a “fifth generation” aircraft. The F-35A combines advanced stealth technology with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, and advanced weapons systems to ensure lethality and survivability against current and emerging high-end threats.

Last December, the Air Force announced its decision to replace the F-16s at the 115 FW with the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter. This was a huge honor for the State of Wisconsin and well-deserved recognition of the Airmen for their “Dedication to Excellence.” This selection will ensure that the Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 70-year flying mission and the associated economic impact and benefits to Madison, the region and the State of Wisconsin, will continue for decades to come. The selection was aided by overwhelming bipartisan support from our governor and congressional delegations as well as strong support from the Mayor of Madison, Dane County Executive and the Madison Chamber of Commerce. Specifically, the 115 FW and its Airmen contribute over $100 million annually to the local and state economy by employing 1,200 civilian and military employees and supporting 1,650 in-state jobs. It is expected bases selected for the F-35A will be allocated resources for base improvements totaling more than $20 million. The 115 FW contributes over $1 million in annual tuition payments to local colleges, returning citizen-airmen to our communities with an undergraduate degree, debt free, with six years of on-the-job training in a diverse array of highly technical career fields.

As the first military responder in the homeland, the National Guard stands ready to support our local communities in a time of crisis or natural disaster. The 115 FW is equipped with multiple domestic operational capabilities such as fire crash and rescue, explosive ordnance disposal, rapidly deployable mobile emergency room and a fatality search and rescue team.

The 115 FW is also vital to the long-term economic sustainability of the Dane County Regional Airport. The 115 FW provides the fire crash and rescue support to the airport. These services would cost millions of dollars annually to Dane County taxpayers if it were not for the 115 FW.

The citizen-airmen who work at the Truax Field also live in local neighborhoods, work in local companies, their children attend local schools and they support local businesses and amenities. In short, they are an important part of our community. Receiving the F-35 mission will ensure that these contributions and many more, will remain for decades to come.

The 115th Fighter Wing needs your support. As part of the selection process, the Air National Guard Bureau is conducting an Environmental Impact Study and public support for the basing is important. There will be opportunities to show your support by attending a public hearing or submitting written comments. Please visit the Together Truax website—www.togethertruax.com/support—to sign up as a supporter and keep up to date on the basing process.

Thank you in advance for your support.

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**Air National Guard’s F-35 Thrusts Economy Forward**

By Jeff Wiegand

U.S. Air Force Colonel (retired)
History Will Inspire Future Workforce

By Christian Overland
Ruth and Hartley Barker Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Few things represent the economic strength of a state more than the stability of its businesses, the quality of its workforce and our quality of life. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce members and friends know this well. So does the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Since 1846, the Society has been Wisconsin’s trusted keeper of its most treasured items and has served as the state’s foremost storyteller. As the new Ruth and Hartley Barker Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society, I’m immensely proud of the many generations of employees who have helped the Society become one of the world’s most respected historical institutions, featuring not only the premier collection of state history, but also one of the largest North American history archives.

These amazing collections allow us to share fantastic stories, including how business and industry have evolved and how entrepreneurs, executives, and everyday workers have helped Wisconsin companies lead the way in making the United States a global leader in manufacturing.

Our historic sites around the state engage and inspire hundreds of thousands of children and families through hands-on experiences and storytelling. From Old World Wisconsin in the southeast to Madeline Island in the northwest, the Society brings families together and reinforces the sense of place and the importance of “What makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin.”

To continue our objective by exciting students across the state about Wisconsin’s rich history, the Society and state leaders are developing plans for a new 21st-century museum on the Capitol Square which will serve as the hub for statewide history education and outreach. The idea of a new history museum has existed for almost two decades. Understanding that our current museum is woefully inadequate, Governors Thompson, Doyle, and Walker have each supported the planning for a new museum. Through a public private partnership, the Society will address critical problems with the current museum involving public safety, failing technology and facility maintenance issues. This project will allow the Society to engage with twice as many students each school year, offer enough room to display the Society’s large manufacturing objects and transform the way guests see themselves in the story of Wisconsin.

The museum will connect with students and local history partners across the state through distance learning technology, traveling exhibits, offsite programs, workshops and other digital channels. It will boost Wisconsin’s economy and tourism industry by attracting more than 150,000 visitors annually.

Since its earliest days, Wisconsin has repeatedly overcome economic challenges facing the nation by developing new industries and revitalizing old ones. Wisconsin’s new museum will help to tell the story of our state’s workforce and the important role that Wisconsin’s businesses have played in the history of our state and the vitality of our communities.

The Wisconsin Historical Society has been here the entire time, collecting, preserving, and sharing the stories that have emerged. We have a proud legacy of being Wisconsin’s premier storyteller and look forward to the next page in our state’s history.

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Wisconsin’s workforce shortage is real. For years, businesses and policymakers have been talking about the skills gap, but as the state’s economy has vastly improved under the leadership of Gov. Scott Walker, the unemployment rate has dropped to a historic low.

The May 2018 employment and unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows Wisconsin’s unemployment rate is at a record low of 2.8 percent—lower than it has ever been since they started tracking the data. While this is great news for Wisconsin, there is another historic data point that causes CEOs from Milwaukee and Eau Claire to Platteville and Green Bay serious heartburn.

According to May 2018 data from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Wisconsin now has more jobs available than people to fill them. Wisconsin currently has about 99,000 people in the labor force who are unemployed, and nearly 3.1 million who have jobs. At first glance, this is great news. However, if all of the people in the labor force who are currently unemployed got a job tomorrow, Wisconsin businesses would still have close to 10,000 jobs left to fill. Right now, there are nearly 100,000 jobs available on JobCenterofWisconsin.com, and that has been a consistent stat for quite some time.

So, as many businesses have a lack of qualified candidates because they cannot find someone with the proper skills, another issue is that there are simply not enough people to fill all the jobs available. Wisconsin not only has a skills gap, it has a people gap.

**The Benefits Cliff**

With a severe shortage of workers available, the focus must be on not only getting the people who are unemployed jobs, but getting people who are not even in the workforce to join it. A regular criticism of the working-age population not in the workforce is that it is because public benefits are too generous. When it is all added up—housing assistance, Medicaid, child care subsidies, FoodShare, etc.—individuals under a certain percentage of the poverty level can receive a substantial amount in welfare benefits. This is not to say that individuals and families that survive on public benefits are swimming in cash, but there are specific roadblocks that can keep some people from entering the workforce.

A major obstacle is what is known as the “benefits cliff.” It is referenced this way, because when individuals earn more money through work, there is a point where many benefits simply cease. When drawn on a graph, it can look, somewhat literally, like a cliff.

For example, let’s look at subsidies for child care. One of the biggest reasons many people choose not to work is that it would be more expensive to work and pay for daycare, than it would be to stay home and take care of the kids. In Milwaukee, a single parent who has two children—ages one and three—who makes 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) or less qualifies for public subsidies for daycare. Two-hundred percent FPL is equivalent to $3,463 per month or $19.98 an hour and full-time daycare for the two kids in Milwaukee would be $1,453 per month. Thanks to government benefits, this parent would qualify for a full subsidy for daycare.

However, until recently, if this parent was given a 50-cent raise, bringing his or her monthly income up to $3,550, they would lose the subsidy entirely. That means a promotion or a raise for their hard work would actually cost them over $1,000 a month.

This, along with so many other programs, can cause people to refuse advancement within a company or, even worse, stay out of the workforce entirely.

According to a recent Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce survey of executives, nearly one-third of CEOs in the state say the public benefits structure has caused them to have fewer applicants for a position or employees to turn down raises and promotions.
benefits cliff thanks to a policy change included in the most recent state budget. “Under the governor’s common sense reform, families who hit 200 percent of federal poverty level remain eligible if they were already in the Wisconsin shares program,” added Sec. Anderson. “As their income rises, they are expected to pay an additional dollar out of pocket for every three they earn over that threshold, and the subsidy phases out in a similar fashion.” The Milwaukee parent who received the 50-cent raise would earn $87 more per month. Instead of losing a $1,000-plus a month benefit causing him or her to refuse any career advancement, now $29 of that raise would go to reduce the subsidy and $58 would stay in their pocket. Eventually, the benefit is reduced to nothing and the parent would no longer need to be reliant on government.

Because of reforms like this, more and more Wisconsinites can focus on advancing their career and joining the workforce.

But it is not just child care and the benefits cliff where Gov. Walker’s administration has looked to get people into the workforce. The state Department of Health Services (DHS) has taken the national lead on reforming FoodShare benefits.

In the past, Wisconsinites who qualified for FoodShare—also known as food stamps—did not have a work requirement. This led to a large population in Wisconsin that could be left out of the workforce. Now, Wisconsin has invested more than $90 million in the FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET) program.

All able-bodied adults, ages 18-49, are required to participate in FSET, another training program or work 80 hours per month to receive FoodShare benefits.

“Since the work requirement began in April 2015, more than 27,000 people in the state have transitioned to the workforce,” said Linda Seemeyer, Secretary of DHS. “Our latest FSET data also show that many of the people participating in the FSET program are exempt from the FSET work requirement, and are participating on a voluntary basis because they want to work.”

In addition to requiring work or training programs to receive benefits, DHS also ensures individuals receiving FoodShare benefits and Medicaid do not face any type of benefits cliff. DHS provides transitional medical assistance, which keeps people from losing medical coverage as their income increases. Additionally, FoodShare benefits are determined on a sliding income scale to have greater incentives to work.

The Walker Administration has also implemented reforms to Wisconsin Works, which provides temporary assistance to needy families—better known as W-2. In the past, agencies that worked with the state would receive payments based on the number of people they signed up for the program.

Instead of rewarding these agencies for making more people dependent on government, the agencies are now paid based on performance. The more people who get off of W-2 and into a job, the more the agencies are paid.

“The new performance based contracts gave DCF the tools to hold agencies accountable for their outcomes and ensure that we are being responsible stewards of the taxpayers’ dollars, and it is working,” commented Sec. Anderson. “Since the new contracts took effect, the job’s placement numbers for participants have dramatically increased and the cost per W-2 participant has greatly decreased.” Another program that has been a key component of getting people back to work is being piloted in Kenosha and Brown Counties. The pilot program, known as Supporting Parents, Supporting Kids takes a unique approach to parents who are delayed on paying child support.

For the last few years, parents who did not pay child support were threatened with jail time or other negative consequences without any questions as to why they were not paying. With this new program, the state is working with the parents to help them work through issues or barriers that may have kept them out of the workforce and then connecting them with employers to get them back on their feet.

According to DCF, the early results are encouraging as most parents that participate in the program return to work and start paying child support again within six months.

**A Well-Trained Workforce**

While DCF and DHS are working to get more Wisconsinites off of welfare and into work, DWD is looking to the next generation of skilled workers.

“Under Gov. Walker, more individuals are working in Wisconsin than ever before, and at DWD, we are providing individuals with multiple options for getting on the path to a rewarding career,” said Ray Allen, Secretary of DWD. “DWD also has worked closely with DCF and DHS on workforce programs to ensure collaboration.”

Since Gov. Walker took office, Wisconsin has invested more money into the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program to help employers train new workers. Looking to the future workforce, the state invested a record $3.9 million in the 2017-18 school year for Youth Apprenticeship (YA), helping 3,023 businesses employ 4,524 youth, both all-time highs for the program.

The YA program helps young kids get excited about the vast career opportunities available in Wisconsin, and it gives them a leg up as they go into the RA program after high school.

“Registered Apprenticeship enables employers to build a customized skills training system, immersing trainees in company culture while helping them earn good-paying, family-supporting wages as they learn a high-demand trade,” added Sec. Allen.

As Wisconsin continues to make progress with reforming public benefits programs and getting more people into the workforce, there is still much work to do. As Wisconsin continues to work on federal policy changes at the state level, there are numerous reforms necessary at the federal level that could better incentivize work over just collecting a check from the government.

One concern that is mentioned is the need for reform to the Social Security disability insurance program, which provides payments to people who are not able to work. However, critics claim some individuals have no medical reason to be receiving disability and others may be able to work in positions where their disability does not impact their work.

If Congress is looking to help businesses across the United States get more people into the workforce, reforms to this program and others may be a good place to start. Fortunately for businesses in the Badger State, Wisconsin is leading the way nationally on public benefit reforms and continues to move in the right direction.
Despite a lingering labor shortage, Wisconsin business leaders are very optimistic about economic conditions in both the U.S. and Wisconsin, according to the summer economic survey conducted by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), the state chamber and largest business group. The survey also shows wages are rising, which is likely attributable to federal tax reform, competition for employees and the improving economy.

Eighty-one percent of the 203 survey respondents rate the U.S. economy as strong or very strong, up sharply from 58 percent six months ago. Eighty percent of business leaders rate the Wisconsin economy as strong or very strong, up from 70 percent.

The number of business executives who say the U.S. is headed in the right direction also rose to 86 percent from 77 percent six months ago. Eighty-nine percent say Wisconsin is headed in the right direction, which is unchanged from the previous survey.

Further, 94.5 percent of respondents predict they will be profitable in the next six months, up slightly from 93 percent in December.

Business leaders seem to credit both President Donald Trump and Gov. Scott Walker for the strong national and state economies. Trump’s approval rating jumped from 72 percent in December to 79 percent now. Walker’s rose slightly to 92 percent from 90 percent.

All the optimism is tempered by concerns over workforce and high health care costs. Seventy-six percent say they are having trouble finding workers, which is down from 80 percent six months ago. But, 61.5 percent say that the labor availability is the top public policy issue facing Wisconsin, up from 51 percent in December. Health care was second, as it was in the last survey.

For the first time since at least the end of the Great Recession, a majority (55.5 percent) of business leaders say they expect wages to grow above 3 percent in the next six months. That strong growth could be caused by a combination of factors, including the recently enacted federal tax reform. Seventy two percent of respondents said they will see tax relief as a result of the new law. Of those, 72 percent said they would use the savings to reinvest in their company, while 33 percent planned to increase wages and benefits. Twenty-five percent said they would use the tax savings to hire additional workers.

“The landmark federal tax reform along with other pro-business actions by the Trump Administration seems to be driving the optimism,” said WMC’s Kurt Bauer. “Reversing the expensive and stifling policies of the previous administration isn’t just creating more optimism, it is also increasing employment, wages and driving stronger GDP growth.”

Other findings:
- 60 percent of businesses expect to hire more employees—only 3.4 percent expect to have fewer workers.
- The plurality of businesses (40.3 percent) don’t know if losing welfare benefits decreases the job applicant pool, but of those who have an opinion on the matter, 31.5 percent say it does, compared to 24.1 percent who say it doesn’t.
- The majority of WMC members (74.3 percent) strongly disapprove or somewhat disapprove of Tammy Baldwin.
- 45.7 percent of businesses support imposing tariffs, while 35 percent oppose them. But the survey was completed before the latest tariffs on steel and aluminum took effect.

How would you rate the current Wisconsin economy?
- Strong / Very Strong: 80%
- Moderate: 17%
- Weak / Very Weak: <1%

How would you rate the current US economy?
- Strong / Very Strong: 82%
- Moderate: 16%
- Weak / Very Weak: <1%

Do you think Wisconsin is headed in the right or wrong direction?
- Right Direction: 89%
- Wrong Direction: 7%

Do you think the US is headed in the right or wrong direction?
- Right Direction: 86%
- Wrong Direction: 11%

Job Approval

President Donald Trump
- Approve: 79%
- Disapprove: 15%

Governor Scott Walker
- Approve: 92%
- Disapprove: 3%

Senator Tammy Baldwin
- Approve: 74%
- Disapprove: 14%
Creating a Bridge Between Business & Education

By Kim Drake  
WMC Communications & Marketing Manager

 успех 2018, Business World add-
ed an additional summer camp—now 
tallying a total of three programs includ-
ing two new locations at UW-Madison and 
UW-Stevens Point.

Business World made its' debut this 
summer in De Pere, WI hosting the first 
program at St. Norbert College. During 
this program, high school students from 
over 32 communities gathered with 
one another to compete, learn and 
acquire a deeper understanding of what 
business and the plethora of career 
opportunities available to them in their 
communities and beyond. Additionally, 
students toured manufacturing facilities 
including TiltleCt Brewery, KU, Fee-
co International, Inc. and Ariens Co. 
The tours provide a glimpse of how 
businesses operate, function and the 
day-to-day structure which takes place 
in the workforce.

The program’s next stop of the 
summer provided students with a taste 
of Madison. UW-Madison's summer 
Business World program presented by 
Jay L. Smith, Chairman of Teel Plastics, 
gathered high school students from 
over two dozen communities and even 
extended into the state of Illinois. The 
breathtaking views of Madison’s cam-
pus and Bucky statues featured across 
the campus provided students with a 
paralleled college experience.

The program featured Scott Kowsalski 
of WPS Health Solutions who spoke on 
the importance of technology. As you 
may already know, the advancement of 
technology and its relation to busi-
ness serves as an ample opportunity 
for tomorrow’s bright young leaders. 
Technology plays an integral role in any 
business today and it can have positive 
or negative effects on one’s operations, 
growth and overall culture. High school 
students from the surrounding counties 
grasped the concept of the types of 
careers and advancement available to 
them as they move beyond high school 
and into the workforce or college.

Overall, Business World in 2018 
continued to bring high school stu-
dents together, teach each of them the 
importance of financial and economic 
literacy, and it provided them with real 
life experiences and insight into how a 
business operates. The company tours, 
knowledge from business owners and 
various professionals, and the collabor-
ative structure of students working 
together building their own companies 
at each camp, provided a solid ground-
work for their understanding of busi-
ness. This experience helped students see 
the world of possibilities that lie in 
front of them as they take their next 
steps forward.

With the summer programs complet-
ed, Business World is now beginning to 
book Mini Business World programs at 
local high schools in the fall. If you are 
interested in participating, please con-
tact Wade Goodsell, WMC Foundation 
Executive Director, at 608.258.3400.

In the last issue of Wisconsin Busi-
ness Voice, we introduced readers 
to this new section: Education Voice. In 
each of the following issues, we will 
continue to make business leaders 
around Wisconsin aware of programs in 
the state that connect the business and 
education communities.

While companies are struggling to 
find workers amid historically low un-
employment, it is important to connect 
with the next generation of workers. Not 
only should businesses connect with 
younger students to show off the terrific 
career opportunities, it is imperative 
that students have the proper skills upon 
graduation from high school, technical 
college or a four-year university to fill 
the types of jobs that will be available in 
our state.

One way to connect with students—if 
you are a manufacturer—is to host an 
open house for area middle and high 
schools during the month of October 
to celebrate Manufacturing Month. You 
can read more about how to do this on 
page 36.

However, another way to connect 
with local schools is to partner with 
them on educational programs. 
That is exactly what companies like 
Hydro-Thermal, Tim O'Brien Homes and 
in the Waukesha area have 
been doing. At an event in May, hosted 
by the Waukesha County Business 
Alliance, local companies and school 
districts came together to showcase 
the partnerships they have 
formulated.

For example, Hydro-Thermal has 
worked with the Waukesha Engineering 
Academy the last three years to teach 
various engineering courses. About 
150 students participate each year.

The students have been able to work 
on multiple projects with Hydro-Ther-
mal as a part of their curriculum, which 
gives them hands on experience. Ad-
ditionally, to further their education, 
the company has hired numerous interns 
in a variety of roles.

Looking to the construction trades, 
Tim O'Brien Homes has partnered with 
Oconomowoc High School to teach 
students more about the building 
trades. Since the program started nine 
years ago, over 100 students have par-
ticipated.

Students who work with Tim O'Brien 
get to experience 46 different trades 
that go into the building process of 
a residential home, and they actually get 
to help construct a home. Many of the 
student participants end up registering 
for the state's Youth Apprenticeship 
program, which gives them a jumpstart 
on a career in construction.

The Waukesha County Business 
Alliance event—Bridging the Gap—was 
a great opportunity to show how the 
business community can work with 
educational leaders to get students not 
only interested in careers available in 
Wisconsin, but help them to learn some 
of the skills necessary to start a career.

If you are struggling to find workers 
and are looking for a way to better 
connect with the future workforce in your 
community, look no further than your 
local middle school or high school. 
That is what is happening in Wauke-
sha County, and it could be one part of 
solving the workforce shortage all 
around the state.
Who Owns Wisconsin’s Economic Future?

By Wade Goodsell  
WMC Foundation Executive Director

At WMC Foundation, we hold strongly to the belief that if the business community doesn’t own our state’s economic future, then who will? It was that question of ownership that launched the Future Wisconsin Project in 2013, bringing together business, government and academic leaders from throughout our state to identify and address Wisconsin’s potential long-term economic challenges.

Rather than focusing on state budget cycles and legislative sessions, it’s the responsibility of the Future Wisconsin Project to see the forest beyond the trees and view Wisconsin’s economy through a 20-year lens. As we mark the five-year anniversary of the Future Wisconsin Project and outline the next five years, it’s imperative to examine where we’ve been.

Under then-WMC Chairman Dan Ariens, Chairman & CEO of Ariens Company, the Future Wisconsin Project established founding partnerships with: University of Wisconsin System, Wisconsin Technical College System, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU).

With WMC Foundation leading and representing the business community, it is this broad coalition that has provided many of the significant accomplishments of the first five years of the Future Wisconsin Project. In that short time frame, WMC Foundation and other Future Wisconsin Project partners: Led the conversation on Wisconsin’s workforce shortage. Prior to 2014, most Wisconsin’s—including policymakers and the media—were not heeding the calls of the business community to do something about the state’s worker shortage. WMC Foundation, through The Future Wisconsin Project, used data and a strong communications strategy to explain the need for not only more skilled workers, but the need for net migration into Wisconsin due to the aging population of the state. Researched the need for a Wisconsin state brand. National polling commissioned by the Future Wisconsin Project revealed that Wisconsin was viewed as cold, agriculturally driven and with little economic opportunity. This research started a conversation that led WEDC to create the “Think-Make-Happen” brand that is being adopted by communities and companies throughout the state. Drove further investment into worker training and career development. The Future Wisconsin Project worked with policymakers, tech colleges, public and private universities and the K-12 system on better preparing students for the jobs available in Wisconsin. By driving the conversation on the state’s workforce needs, Wisconsin has invested more in apprenticeships, career planning for students as early as sixth grade and additional funding for worker training programs. Served as the catalyst for a multi-million dollar talent attraction campaign. While other accomplishments helped to equip Wisconsin’s current workforce, with an aging workforce and declining birth rate, the need exists for population growth to meet the current and future workforce demands. Understanding that demand led to efforts to attract new workers from other states. After the Future Wisconsin Project produced two talent attraction videos, policymakers elected to invest $1 million into a talent attraction advertising campaign in Chicago. After the launch of the initial campaign, policymakers quickly approved investing an additional $7 million to expand the campaign into other cities nationally.

In 2018, WMC Foundation is working with nationally acclaimed economic futurist Ted Abernathy from Economic Leadership in Raleigh, North Carolina. As we write the next five year chapter of the Future Wisconsin Project, we anticipate: Launching the Future Wisconsin Steering Committee to drive the Future Wisconsin Project. Wisconsin’s future will not be strong unless someone is in the driver’s seat. If Wisconsin’s business community does not take the lead, then who will? Business leaders must join together with academic and government leaders to continue to proactively address tomorrow’s challenges today by serving as the Project’s strategic visionary and Wisconsin’s preeminent destination for thought leadership. Developing metrics in distinct issue areas that will ultimately serve as our data-driven dashboard to determine and define success. Metrics will include up-to-date national rankings, clear public policy goals and an annual report that tracks the progress of the Future Wisconsin Project in key issue areas. The WMC Board of Directors, WMC membership, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce Executives and the Future Wisconsin Townhall participants, will ultimately shape recommendations that will be presented to the Future Wisconsin Steering Committee. Driving the conversation throughout the year. The annual Future Wisconsin Summit has become a can’t-miss annual event for leaders across Wisconsin, however the challenges that face Wisconsin’s economy are not just limited to each November. Through a steering committee, annual report and other initiatives, the Future Wisconsin Project will drive the conversation throughout the year to ensure key stakeholders remain focused on benchmarks and progress of the project. Empowering state leaders to ensure Wisconsin has a strong economic future regardless of political party or legislative control. Policymakers, the media, business, academic and government leaders throughout Wisconsin will be equipped to address Wisconsin’s long term economic challenges today through a strategic, data-driven and actionable Future Wisconsin Project. The Future Wisconsin Project has taken steps forward, however our work is far from over. Wisconsin will continue to face workforce and economic challenges that if left unaddressed could jeopardize our state’s economic resurgence. The next generation is dependent on business, academic and government leaders coming together for the future of Wisconsin, placing sound policy ahead of personal politics and the long-term ahead of the near.

If you’re interested in taking a leadership role in the Future Wisconsin Project and helping develop the strategic plan for how our state will take on significant challenges over the next 20 years, please reach out to me. We are currently forming our steering committee and need input from every industry and every corner of the state.

Are you ready to take control of our state’s economic future? Join us today, before it’s too late.

Wisconsin Townhall participants, will ultimately shape recommendations that will be presented to the Future Wisconsin Steering Committee.

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Which state or states should Wisconsin compare our economy to, and what are the best metrics to gauge the status of our economy? Those questions were debated during a Future Wisconsin town hall discussion sponsored by WMC Foundation intended to see where Wisconsin stands compared to its national and global competitors.

Some news is good. Wisconsin currently has the lowest unemployment rate—2.8 percent—in history with more Wisconsinites working than ever before. Wisconsin’s GDP growth was higher than every other bordering state in the last quarter and income growth is also strong, besting most upper Midwestern states, including Minnesota, whose economy Wisconsin’s is most often compared to.

But, some of the news was mixed. On overall business climate, Wisconsin still has a ways to go. We still rank poorly compared to other states in overall tax burden, despite $8 billion in tax cuts since Gov. Scott Walker took office in 2011. Part of the problem is Wisconsin’s progressive legacy. Another is that many national rankings, like the Tax Foundation, do not recognize things like Wisconsin’s Manufacturers and Agricultural Production Tax Credit because it a credit rather than a flat rate. By contrast, New York State simply does not have a tax rate for qualified manufacturers.

Workforce, of course, came up as a major challenge for the state, now and in the future. That led to a discussion about immigration and the need to pursue comprehensive reform in Washington. It also sparked a conversation about the high unemployment rate among African Americans in Wisconsin, but also that the state and some metro areas rank very poorly as places to live for African Americans.

The town hall participants also learned that Wisconsin dropped from 10 to 13 in the Chief Executive Magazine ranking of states with the best business climate. It was illuminating to learn that Wisconsin actually improved in each of the criteria Chief Executive Magazine measures for its ranking; it’s just that other states improved more. That offered an important lesson; Wisconsin can never rest on its laurels. Status quo equals uncompetitive, which is why Future Wisconsin needs to be the catalyst to for constant reform.

Wisconsin can never rest on its laurels. Status quo equals uncompetitive...

Here were the top 9 choices:
1. State and local taxes as a percentage of income
2. Best state for business ranking
3. Labor force participation rate
4. Labor force growth
5. Unemployment rate
6. Percentage of change in real personal income
7. State and local government employees per 1,000 residents
8. 5-year new business survival rate
9. Individual income tax per capita
Examining Cultural Differences With Taiwan

Foxconn has done something very special for Wisconsin in that it has raised the state’s profile not only in Taiwan, but raised its profile in Japan, in Korea, in China, in Indonesia, in the Philippines, in Malaysia, so the opportunities for Wisconsin companies have increased dramatically because of that recognition,” said Katy Sinnott, Vice President of International Business Development at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), at a recent WMC Foundation event.

The Foundation program—Foxconn and Beyond: Doing Business with Taiwan—focused on Wisconsin’s newfound connection to businesses in Asia. With the technology giant building a $10 billion facility in southeastern Wisconsin, many businesses within the state are now looking to Taiwan and that region as having many potential opportunities.

Already, Wisconsin and Taiwan are active trading partners. In 2017, Wisconsin exported $166.5 million in goods and services to Taiwan, making it the 23rd highest of any country in the world. On the import side of things, Wisconsin purchased $575.2 million in goods and services from Taiwan, making it the very special for Wisconsin in connection to businesses in Asia with Taiwan.

While there are numerous differences between Wisconsin and Taiwan, Sinnott argued it is better to look at the similarities. “What’s interesting to focus on is not our differences, but the similarities between Wisconsin and Taiwan,” she said. “Here in Wisconsin, we really want to know who Wisconsin companies interact with them, we have to be prepared to respond rapidly, and to move quickly to deal with that entrepreneurial spirit that they have.”

Mia Chih-Chu Liang, Director of the Taiwan Trade Center in Chicago, explained at the WMC Foundation event that much of Asia is still about relationship building. Companies throughout Taiwan are family businesses that have deep connections to their hierarchical structure.

Liang also touched on the stereotype that business dealings in Taiwan and Asia can be centered on dinner meetings involving the consumption of alcohol. She explained that the stereotype may hold true in some cases, however it is going away with a younger generation of business leaders. “If you don’t feel comfortable with that, just say no,” she added. “They will understand.”

For more information about international business, check out WMC’s new video series, Wisconsin Abroad, available on WMC’s YouTube channel: youtube.com/wmcs01

Sinnott added. “Therefore, when Wisconsin companies interact with them, they have to be prepared to respond rapidly, and to move quickly to deal with that entrepreneurial spirit that they have.”

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The panel discussion also featured John Ohnesorge, Director for East Asian legal studies at the University of Wisconsin Law School. Ohnesorge expressed optimism that the legal system in Taiwan is vastly improved compared to 30 or 40 years ago.

“Taiwan has a proper legal system, which makes it different from mainland China,” he said. “This should give Wisconsin companies more confidence when entering into contracts with Taiwanese companies.

While there are numerous differences between Wisconsin and Taiwan, Sinnott argued it is better to look at the similarities. “What’s interesting to focus on is not our differences, but the similarities between the way Wisconsin companies do business and the way Taiwanese companies do business,” she said. “Here in Wisconsin, we really want to know who our partners are, it’s the same thing in Taiwan. So a lot of the things we know already, we should continue to do when working with Taiwanese companies.”

For more information about international business, check out WMC’s new video series, Wisconsin Abroad, available on WMC’s YouTube channel: youtube.com/wmcs01

Wisconsin Abroad
Do You Make the Coolest Thing?

We make some pretty cool things in Wisconsin: motorcycles in Milwaukee, military vehicles in Oshkosh, lawn mowers in Horicon, furniture in Arcadia and real, natural cheese in Plymouth, among so many others.

Last year, Wisconsinites cast nearly 200,000 votes in the Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin contest, run by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC). About 150 products were nominated by companies, workers and everyone in between in 2017, and there is no doubt that even more products will be submitted this year.

So, what do you think the Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin is?

In 2016, the inaugural year of the contest, Harley-Davidson’s Milwaukee 8 engine took home the grand prize, topping Johnsonville sausages and Fincantieri Marinette Marine’s Littoral Combat Ship, which is built for the U.S. Navy.

During last year’s contest, a bracket-style tournament determined the top four! Oshkosh Corporation’s Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) brought home the grand prize. The JLTV beat out Mercury Marine’s Joystick Piloting System, the Ariens Sno-Thro (a Wisconsin necessity in winter) and Generac’s XC Generator.

This year, the contest will begin Monday, Aug. 20, and nominations will be accepted until Friday, Aug. 31. The first round of voting, which will determine the top 16 products that will participate in Manufacturing Madness, will be from Monday, Sept. 10 to Sunday, Sept. 16. The top 16 will be announced the following Monday, Sept. 17.

In the weeks that follow, two more rounds will take the competition from 16 products, to eight products, to the top four! A final round of voting will take place Tuesday, Oct. 2 to noon on Tuesday, Oct. 9, and the winner will be announced at the State of Wisconsin Business & Industry Luncheon that same day. The top four products will be invited to display that product at the Luncheon.

After each round, the companies and products that move onto the next will be announced during a live broadcast via Facebook Live. So, if you want to stay up to date on all the details throughout the competition, make sure to like WMC by visiting Facebook.com/WisconsinMC.

Products can be from anywhere in the manufacturing industry, as long as it is made here in Wisconsin. Additionally, the company does not have to be headquartered in the state, as long as it has a presence and the final product is assembled here.

WMC also encourages companies to nominate their own products. Then go out and earn votes. In the past, companies have encouraged employees, clients and those in their local community to cast votes. Some have appeared on local television or radio shows to brag about the product they make and last year’s winner, Oshkosh Corporation, purchased a digital billboard along the interstate promoting the JLTV as the Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin.

These and many other marketing ideas can and should be implemented for a company to win. And do not forget the power of social media. Getting a post to “go viral” might push your product into the finals.

To nominate a product, visit madeinwis.com from Aug. 20-31.

2017 STATISTICS

SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION

- Reached 42,063 individuals with LIVE videos
- Reached 111,096 individuals overall
- 499,700 total impressions with #MadeInWis hashtag
- 100,000+ total impressions
- Nearly 300 page views per day

VOTING

- First Round: 31,919
- Top 16: 91,253
- Top 8: 54,508
- Final Round: 18,256
- Total Votes: 195,966

TV & MEDIA COVERAGE

Coolest Thing received coverage in every major media market on TV, radio and print. Nearly 100 news stories in total.
Plan Ahead: October is Manufacturing Month

By Rusty Schieber
Vice President of Operations Support, Brakebush Brothers, Inc.

Todays companies are using all the arrows in their quiver to attract, hire and retain great employees. One of those arrows that can be employed effectively to attract employees and with minimal cost is to host an Open House celebrating “October is Manufacturing Month.” Targeting this to the local high school is doubly effective at capturing both college and non-college bound future employees.

For those companies who have sponsored October is Manufacturing Month open houses in coordination with their local high schools, several lessons are quickly learned: Plan early and find a sponsor within the school who can help you recruit students and assist in the logistics of the event from the school’s side.

**Start coordinating the event early**

Contacting your local schools in April or May is not too early for the October event. Starting to plan in September is too late. Remember that not only are the students off in the summer but most of the school’s staff are off also. Getting in contact with a potential sponsor from within the district is doubly hard when they are on summer break. Early planning will allow time for the school to budget and allocate funding for transportation as well as to get it onto the school’s calendar. Many principal’s have a small pool of discretionary funds. If funding becomes an issue, try to tap into that resource. With this being July, don’t worry, you are not behind the power curve. Start coordinating with your local high school as soon as possible.

Schedule the open house between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM. The open house must fit within the normal school day. The closer your manufacturing facility is to the school the wider your scheduling window becomes. Anticipate that the students cannot leave the school before 9:00 AM and must be back to the school by 3:00 PM. To buy time, schedule the open house mid-day and feed the kids lunch! Use that lunch time for personal interaction with the students by your employees. High school kids can eat so don’t short them in that regard.

**Clearly document and communicate the range of occupations that your company employs**

Most companies and most local families recognize that their local manufacturing facilities need shop floor “production workers”. That is true. What most companies fail to sell and local families fail to recognize is that a company is much more than production workers. Today’s manufacturing companies include entry level production workers, as well as highly trained skill positions such as welders, electricians, electronic techs, computer programmers and analysts as well as the professional positions such as accountants, scientists, business professionals, lawyers and engineers. Highlight all your employment requirements as well as your in-house educational and apprenticeship options. Sell your business! The goal of your open house is to have immediate influence on your local students who do not plan on attending a four-year college, as well as seeing a delayed response by those students who do plan to attend a university.

**Find a sponsor within the school**

An event may be perfectly planned but without a champion within the school selling the event on your behalf, participation will suffer. Potential promoters of the event include the local Skills USA coach, FFA or FBLA advisor, Tech Ed instructional staff, guidance staff or even a teacher who has a spouse employed in the manufacturing sector. The actual role of the promoter within the system may not be as important as having an energetic voice within the system who can assist in influencing students to attend. Normal parental communication channels such as the school’s web site and newsletter can also be used to get parental support, but we all know that the real influencers are within the physical walls of the local high school.

Another great option to showcase your company to the local high schools students is to host a Mini Business World. WMC Foundation’s Business World and Mini Business World bring real business simulations to High School students. Hosting a one-day Mini Business World brings those students having an interest in business into your walls. Cost is minimal and WMC Foundation does most the work! Both planning an open house during Manufacturing Month and hosting a Mini Business World program are great opportunities to influence the next generation of workers. When it comes to planning an open house, remember to be proactive. Early planning will help ensure a successful event for both the students, as well as your company.

**LOOKING TO PLAN A MANUFACTURING MONTH EVENT?**

If you would like assistance in planning an open house for Manufacturing Month, please contact Nick Novak at Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce:

Nick Novak
Director of Communications & Marketing
nnovak@wmc.org
608.258.3400

For more info, visit: wmc.org
“Waupeca Foundry is in to drive toward its 2020 vision of 25% energy intensity reduction.”

Waupeca Foundry remains competitive by being committed to environmental sustainability, we are not only reducing our impact on the environment but make us a more competitive entity by committing to continuous improvement in environmental sustainability by reducing our energy use,” Nikolai said. “Our efforts not only reduce our impact on the environment but make us a more competitive iron castings supplier in the global marketplace.”

In 2016, Waupeca Foundry achieved certification to the ISO 50001 International Standard for Energy Management Systems. It was the only U.S.-based foundry, and just the second Wisconsin facility, to receive the certification.

In 2017, this commitment to energy efficiency placed it among 15 elite recipients that received the “Excellence in Energy Efficiency Award” from Focus on Energy and the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. With support and guidance from Focus on Energy and Wisconsin Public Service, Waupeca Foundry completed a series of equipment upgrades that saved more than 4.4 million kilowatt hours of electricity and 250,000 therms of natural gas.

“By continually improving our environmental sustainability, we are not only reducing our impact on the environment, we’re remaining competitive in a global marketplace,” said Bryant Esch, environmental coordinator for Waupeca Foundry.

The Wisconsin-based Focus on Energy program identified projects at the gray iron foundry that were designed to conserve energy plant-wide. Some of the more significant initiatives included:

• Converting LED lighting throughout manufacturing, office, and employee areas. The retrofit effort replaced inefficient lighting with LED technology, with over 800 energy efficient LED fixtures installed within the past two years.
• Replacing outdated compressors with new, more efficient models. At the same time, ductwork and additional equipment had been installed to capture the waste heat and use it to heat buildings during the colder months.
• Expanding and networking electric and natural gas metering systems for monitoring real-time energy use.
• Implementing new HVAC control technologies.
• Replacing outdated compressors with new, more efficient models.

Ongoing energy conservation initiatives are part of Waupeca Foundry’s vision for sustainability. By 2020, the company goal is to:

• Reduce energy intensity by 25 percent.
• Promote state-of-the-art pollution control technologies.
• Reduce spent foundry sand generation by 30 percent and to reuse/ recycle spent sand used in the metal casting process to achieve zero landfill disposal.
• Reduce water consumption by 80 percent.

Waupeca Foundry remains competitive because of its steadfast commitment to building on a legacy of getting the job done, which includes being fully pledged to environmental sustainability.

My Focus on Energy Story:
Marco Gonzalez, Waupeca Foundry, Inc.
Waupeca County, Wisconsin

“As you can imagine, energy is one of the largest costs of manufacturing for our business. Our partnership with Focus on Energy helped to identify the most promising energy savings opportunities, including:

• Plant-wide LED lighting upgrades
• Replacing outdated compressors
• Expanding electric and natural gas metering systems for monitoring real-time energy use

Because of these and other energy reduction projects, Waupeca Foundry has seen a 23% energy reduction since 2009, and we are the first U.S. gray iron foundry to achieve ISO 50001 Energy Management System certification.

By reducing our energy use, we are strengthening our commitment to and setting the pace in the industry for environmental sustainability. As a result, we have secured our sustainability progress and overall competitiveness.”

Marco Gonzalez
Energy Manager
Waupeca Foundry, Inc.

Focus on Energy partners with Wisconsin utilities to help businesses improve energy usage.

Power Your Profitability
Call Focus on Energy today at 1-800-762-7077 or visit: focusonenergy.com/business

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Johnson Financial Group CEO, Jim Popp, likes to joke about being fired from his first three jobs—with the San Francisco 49ers, Chicago Bears and Houston Oilers—before making a career move into the financial sector.

Years later, after spending almost three decades with another bank, Popp joined Johnson Financial Group in early 2017 as President of Johnson Bank and Executive Vice President of Johnson Financial Group. On January 1, 2018, he assumed the role of CEO of Johnson Financial Group.

Though Popp spent most of his career with a larger bank, he jumped at the opportunity to join Johnson Financial Group because he was motivated by the company’s local feel and compelling story.

“At Johnson Financial Group, we make all of our decisions here in Wisconsin, and we really connect with the communities that we do business in,” he said in an interview. “That is how I grew up in this business, and what I wanted to do moving forward.”

Additionally, he said the overall atmosphere is just a fresh take on the financial services industry. His favorite thing about going to work each day is knowing that Johnson Financial Group treats all of its customers, associates and communities as a part of the family. Being a local firm, Popp says it brings everyone closer to the people they help each and every day.

That is why Johnson Financial Group has been the presenting sponsor of WMC’s Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin contest. While they do business with countless manufacturers in Wisconsin, the contest offers them a chance to highlight the businesses and people in the communities they serve.

“We just think the Coolest Thing contest is fun,” Popp added. “It is a great way to showcase something that is really important to the state of Wisconsin, which is the value and breadth of our state’s manufacturing industry.”

Johnson Financial Group will once again be sponsoring the Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin contest, which will begin accepting nominations Aug. 20 at madeinwis.com. Popp said he does not have a favorite going into this year’s contest, but he knows the ultimate winner will “definitely showcase the state’s strong manufacturers and the great people that make things in Wisconsin.”
Businesses, We Need You in Green Bay!

By Jayme Sellen and Sue Zittlow
Greater Green Bay Chamber

The success of any business is intricately tied to its workforce. Having the right people in the right positions has always been important, however, recently that has been difficult to achieve. Finding people with the needed skills and experience has increasingly become a challenge. We are at a unique time in history for workforce. Our state is experiencing record low unemployment and low birth rates. Making matters even more difficult for employers is the high volume of workers retiring. If we don’t take action to face the workforce shortage, Wisconsin’s economy will be left behind.

The Greater Green Bay Chamber’s Partners in Education Board is taking on these challenges through its efforts relating to funding equity in K-12 public education and parental engagement.

Partners in Education is made up of school officials, business leaders and non-profit organizations. Our Board has found synergy regarding their two efforts. To reach common ground both sides took the time to understand each other’s fiscal constraints. These discussions were by no means easy; as any open and honest conversation rarely is. However, it was discovered we had more in common than not; our businesses came to realize the sustainability of their business resides within the K-12 system and educators recognized businesses were their customers.

Every student is needed and needs to be college, career and community ready. Unfortunately, businesses are seeing disparities among recent graduates which they rely on more than ever. The way we fund some of our schools makes achieving career readiness a challenge.

So what can we do as a state to embrace the challenge of a workforce shortage and school funding disparities? K-12 public education funding is an extremely complicated labyrinth of equations, spreadsheets and limitations. In 1993, revenue limits were capped causing school districts to be frozen at their high or low revenue limits at that time; creating funding gaps between high and low revenue districts.

While recent legislation has helped lessen those gaps, school districts still face new, unique and expensive challenges such as higher populations of English language learners, special needs students, declining enrollment and economically disadvantaged children. Low revenue districts struggle more than their higher revenue neighbors, resulting in the disparities our business leaders are experiencing.

We seek equity within the K-12 public education funding system so that every student graduates with a modern education helping our businesses compete globally and competitively.

To be truly successful students need both a modern education and life skills (i.e. communication, teamwork, accountability, emotional intelligence, problem solving and critical thinking skills). Parental involvement is crucial for the required development for both sets of skills. Choosing one’s career path is a daunting task for both students and parents. Parents struggle to help their children understand the educational requirements and the economics of career planning due to its complexity.

To assist parents and students, Partners in Education has started the “Parents, We Need You” campaign. This campaign provides resources connecting parents, students and teachers with business leaders. By working with business leaders we are disseminating this information to parents at their worksites during their lunch breaks and raising awareness of resources through Public Service Announcements. Through these efforts, parents learn how to engage their children in exploring interests, recognizing their strengths and planning their children’s future career paths.

130 businesses already are engaged and have profiles to showcase their career opportunities with teachers, students and parents through www.greatergbc.org/YourFuture.

Businesses, We Need You to become engaged with parents, students and educators.

Join our efforts to create a better pipeline of workers by exploring www.greatergbc.org/PartnersInEducation and contacting Sue Zittlow at szittlow@greatergbc.org or 920.593.3412.
IT’S NO LONGER A QUESTION OF IF; IT’S A QUESTION OF WHEN.

Cyber attacks within manufacturing are on the rise.

Thanks to shop floor connectivity, mobile devices, IoT, and cloud computing, cyber threats are growing and changing. It’s only a matter of time before hackers strike and the next breach occurs. Wipfli’s comprehensive services help you proactively address mounting threats and effectively respond in the event of an incident.

Not sure where to start? For a limited time, Wipfli is offering two specially priced services to help you assess the state of your systems and the potential risks:

- Gain visibility into your company’s cyber risk posture with a Cyber Risk Scorecard.
- Get a baseline of your employees’ security awareness with a Social Engineering Baseline Assessment.

Uncover your organization’s risk before it’s too late. Request your assessment today.

wipfli.com/cyberpromo