



How to get Wisconsin working again

By: Brett Hulsey – January 5th, 2013

As we move into 2013, it's time to get Wisconsin working again to create more jobs, better schools, more affordable health care, and cleaner energy and lakes. We also need to get our state government working again for regular people, not rich self-interest groups. The election showed people want real results, not more political rhetoric.

The good news is we have a \$342 million budget surplus, according to the state comptroller's most recent report, to invest in wise ways to get people working. Here are some ways to invest that money to get Wisconsin working again:

Get people back to work: We need to invest in job training, our schools, the University of Wisconsin System and building projects to get people back to work and balance our budget in the way that protects workers, not hurts them. There are thousands of job openings across our state begging for qualified workers who need training.

Put the Commerce Department back in charge of jobs: Switching from the proven Department of Commerce to the risky Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. caused some of the worst job creation in the nation, according to the nonpartisan Bureau of Labor Statistics and Forbes magazine. We should go back to a Commerce Department. These issues were raised at hearings when the Legislature was considering the WEDC proposal, which was based on the Indiana Economic Development Corp. Indiana's former deputy budget director — now with the conservative Cato Institute — called that agency a “boondoggle.” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that the corporation made unsupportable and inflated jobs claims. The solution is to put proven professionals back in charge of creating jobs now.

Make government work for people again: We need to pass redistricting reform so we have voters choosing legislators, not legislators picking their voters. The secret redistricting deal has cost taxpayers over \$1 million in legal bills. A nonpartisan system like Iowa has used for decades would save us money and our democracy.

Fund better schools: We should pass the Save our Schools plan to invest in our public schools, expand job training, fund technical colleges and the UW System, restore the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and the Youth Business Mentor Partnership programs, reduce class sizes, and promote world-class school standards to make our schools better.

Provide health care for all: We should implement health care exchanges and community health care programs to provide health care for all while improving health and

controlling costs. We should provide health insurance for the 500,000 Wisconsinites who lack coverage.

Protect seniors and women's rights: We need to stop GOP efforts that hurt our parents and seniors and take away the right of women and families to decide their health and child-bearing future. We can do that by passing the Senior Citizen Protection Act and restoring funding for the Healthy Youth Act.

Create cleaner energy jobs: We need to stop sending \$12.5 billion out of state to oil and coal companies. We should invest in homegrown clean energy such as solar and manure digesters to create good jobs. A study by the Energy Center of Wisconsin shows that investing \$700 million in energy efficiency would yield a net \$1.9 billion savings and create 11,000-13,000 jobs now.

We also need to cut energy waste in our government and other buildings. Focus on Energy yields almost \$2.50 in return for every \$1 invested. The Jobs, Energy and Tax Savings Act would cut energy bills to our 9,000 state facilities. We did this in Dane County and the average savings was 18 percent.

Quit giving away jobs: The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families reports that Gov. Scott Walker gave away \$1.3 billion in federal help for health care, Internet upgrades, job training, and our train system. This cost thousands of jobs in our state and is one reason we don't get our fair share of what we pay into the federal government.

Clean up our drinking water, lakes and environment: We should not make strip mining easier, but we should close loopholes that threaten our drinking water protections. If out-of-state strip mine companies want to mine here, they should apply for a permit to do so, not gut our laws. The Flambeau mine next to the Flambeau River shows our existing laws can allow mining and largely protect our environment.

We should also move forward with rules to clean up our lakes and invest in clean water programs like more cow-power manure digesters to create energy, clean water, and jobs.

If we take these common sense steps, we can get Wisconsin's workers and government working again to build a better future for 2013 and beyond.