

☞ **07hr\_SC-LEUA\_Misc\_pt21e**



☞ July 8, 2008 ... Informational Hearing ... DWD Job Center Consolidation

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

## WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

### 2007-08

(session year)

### Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

### Committee on ... Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs (SC-LEUA)

### COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

### INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)  
(**ab** = Assembly Bill)                      (**ar** = Assembly Resolution)                      (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)  
(**sb** = Senate Bill)                              (**sr** = Senate Resolution)                              (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

\* Contents organized for archiving by: Mike Barman (LRB) (November/2010)

# ① Info Hearing - 7/8/08 - DWD Job Centers

Roberta Gassman

- written testimony & power point
- not closing job centers, they are a partner
- trying to extend reach statewide
- not withdrawing vets, disabled, dislocated workers services
  - \* Lehman ?
  - Schultz letter good
  - happy w/ partnership in Racine
  - will they delay in some places or change the plan?
    - extending reach to include rural WI
    - hearing from people that understand the need
    - trying to cut more responsibly than other states
    - media accounts not true
    - willing to show flexibility to achieve outcomes
    - won't be autocratic
  - getting \$ worth out of DWD
  - believe in long term goals, but ? on implementation
  - specifically ready to go w/ this plan now?
  - calculated transpo costs?
  - looking for \$.5 → 1 m savings/yr.
  - a lot of uncertainty
    - virtual job ctr. - \$100k pilot (.5 yrs ago)
    - next round of improvements online in Sep.
    - video conferencing in Jan.
    - negotiating new space

(2)

### \* Grothman ?:

- skill level associated w/ # of degrees
- biz. marketing degrees - too many
- trying to make things more efficient
- staff availability in areas currently served
  - will have office hours + flexibility
  - new jobs opening soon as result of retirements
  - need comfort w/ technology
  - looking to deliver both soft + technical skills
- discussed w/ area directors?
  - have been facing challenges for a couple of years
  - partners have known this is coming

### \* Wicks ?:

- can we ~~start~~ go back if feds come up w/ move to next year?
- working w/ feds to try + max out potential

### Dave Hansen

- reads written testimony

### Judy Robson

- DVD responsive w/ teams coming in to help workers
- what if no computer skills or access?
- a lot of unknowns
- what are stats on people going to job chrs.?
- wants complete plan + cost benefit analysis
- DVR clients req'd to travel long distances
- consolidation needs to serve workers
- concerns about less availability
- wants plan slowed down + work w/ legis.

③

\* - SC ask Gassman to follow up for  
writing

### Cory Mason

- commends DWD for moving fwd.
- heard from Racine Co. people about this
- Racine has highest unemployment in the state
- accessibility - increased w/ <sup>virtual</sup> job center, but not at expense of those that currently use service
- maintain vets service
- TAA funding - those affected by foreign trade agreements
- hopeful about case by case consideration

§

### John Nygren

- written testimony
- some services already left rural areas as of July 1
- services being affected in areas of higher unemployment
- plan not implemented
- increased transportation costs

### Gary Sherman

- hearing is good
- impressed w/ DWD concerns
- re-structuring of agencies away from his constituents
- what happens to remaining tenants in job centers?
- large distances up north
- how will this peripherally affect other agencies?

#### - Lehman

- pulling out small part of team in these centers
- trying to maintain face to face relationships

(4)

NC WIT  
WDB

WE Rapids Mayor

Jodie Lassa, Sally Cutler & Mary Jo Carson

- consolidating staff from 4 offices in her district
- has written testimony
- 15 out of 25 Dental employees don't know how to use computer
- Mary Jo Carson
  - struggling to reinvent center of state
  - thank you for discussion
- Sally Cutler
  - 200 mi. radius of service down to Warsaw
  - excited about technology
  - need to be partners w/ DWD
  - blindsided by decision
  - part of 4 WDB's piloting virtual job ctr.
  - computer accessibility in rurals a problem
  - as a state we are underresourced

\* technology timeline to Mayor Carson

Laurie Mataraw (malabatu)

- has written testimony (read in entirety)

Richard Best

- sent e-mail
- related to Paul Gordon
- high tech issues
- not adequately engaged in process
- delay implementation until at least Dec. 31
- impact on the remaining rest
- June 25 mtg. w/ DWD staff negotiation turned into ultimatum

(5)

### Pat O'Hara

- recognize Hansen + Nygren
- Marinette Ctr. a good example
- lost staff time + transportation costs
- will pay for costs to operate computers
- local agencies will pay for equipment for VSLs
- located in Marinette Tech college
- nice to have been consulted
  - Lehman
    - mobile wkr. come back to chr?
    - yes

### Bruce Wilk

- came out of nowhere w/ bad planning
- Washington Co. looking in to lease issues
- need scores for all services @ the center
  - more likely to have transpo, computer access + disability issues

### Paul Gordon

- extensive e-mails through Jen in Wisch's office
- need to address all issues
- setting up one stop shops
- trying to get federal \$
- haven't been consulted

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## Deanna Krell

- doing job on a mobile basis
- post H.S. employment direction
- travels to H.S.'s in Waukesha Co. during school year
- has tablet laptop + wireless connectivity
- can do casework from the field
- met w/ consumers @ libraries + other community locations
  - Lehman
    - where work?
      - SOB in Waukesha
    - travel costs reduced?
      - short distances
    - more impact in large

## Michael Schnapp

- has written testimony

Elizabeth Clumb - no show

## Bruce Markert

- Vets staff consolidating prior to this plan
- leaving staff in high traffic areas
- works w/ CVS's
- Congress changed responsibilities for vets.
- staff being reduced
  - Lehman
    - calculate lost time for travel?

(7)

### Linda Veece

- has written testimony
- hard to motivate people to go to job ctr.
- staff training suffers when spread too thin
- client assistance pgr.
- reduce bricks + mortar
- vets w/ brain injuries need mobile services

### Pat Schwamm

- has written testimony
- can't rely on feds
- changing demographic in MSN
- can call for info
- WA, OR, MN, PA
- Grothman?
  - % of jobs statewide filled by job ctrs.
  - guess 25-30%
- Wirth?
  - original concept was to have one stop shop

### Shelly Patterson

- never been to job ctr.
- communicated w/ DVR via technology
- can control environment @ home
- working w/ DVR
- ~~the~~ proposal has possibilities - take advantage of technology



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### Bob Borremans

- has written testimony
- federal funding going down
- plan is short term quick fix
- need real problem solving process
- DWD more interested in their own pgm.
- jobcenter.org - not intended as substitute for physical location
- need interaction with people

### Dan Schmitz

- USDOL - Vets Training Service Director
- supports initiative
- in vets ctrs, prisons, homeless ctrs
- spread thin, large # of vets coming back
- in on beginning of planning
- reduction of staff is only other way to save costs

### Hector Colon

- 2 phased approach
- 1<sup>st</sup> - move staff into 12 regional hubs
- reaction to fiscal challenges
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - work w/ partners - engage electeds & others
- reach out to DVR users w/ mobile
- basically re-states what Robertta said
- not closing job centers, not even consolidating
- will work w/ comte. & tech centers

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- could be true that some job centers could struggle
- alternative is laying off staff



JULY 8 LEVA HEARING

Changes to DWD's  
Employment and  
Training Services

Jason Stein  
WSJ  
252-6129



**Plotkin, Adam**

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**From:** Marilinda Johnson [mjohnson@wisafclcio.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 08, 2008 2:21 PM  
**To:** Sen.Coggs  
**Subject:** DWD Job Training

WI State AFL-CIO

**To:** Senate Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs Committee Members  
**From:** Phil Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer  
**Date:** July 8, 2008  
**Re:** **Reorganization of DWD Employment & Training Services**

We understand that there is some debate about the redesign of employment and training services in the Department of Workforce Development. The essential goal in delivering such services should be how to maximize the funds that actually reach workers to provide real job training. The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO supports any model or delivery structure that will provide the most effective staff support and comprehensive job training assistance for workers seeking employment.

*PN/JR/mj:opeiu#9,alf-cio,clc*

07/08/2008



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Laura Dresser  
1344 Jenifer Street  
Madison WI 53703

Members of the Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs  
Wisconsin State Senate  
Testimony regarding Job Center consolidation  
7/8/2008

**Dear Members of the Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs,**

I'm writing today as a Wisconsin resident, an economist who studies Wisconsin's economy and labor market, and as a practitioner who has worked with local and state leaders to improve the state's workforce development system. I welcome your interest in the issues facing Wisconsin's workforce development system and appreciate this opportunity to add my observations to this important discussion.

The most important fact that frames this discussion is the long-term decline in federal funding for workforce development. In 2004, two reports documented the dramatic federal decline in funding for workforce development, and the ways that shifts in funding, especially declines in W2 funding, were having a negative impact in Job Centers across the state. (Reports both from Center on Wisconsin Strategy. See ***The Impact of Budget Cuts on Wisconsin's Job Centers: Staff Losses and Service Declines*** and ***Declining Federal Support for Wisconsin Workforce Development*** both available at [www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org)) As those reports make clear, the writing has been on the wall for some time that the federal government has been, and likely will continue to be, committing fewer and fewer dollars to workforce development in the state. As the federal commitment has fallen, the infrastructure for workforce development has suffered in ways large and small.

At this point in the process, and given the severe federal cuts, it is important that the state take stock of what is working and what is possible in such a constrained situation. If the state doesn't consolidate centers, it is inevitable that the services offered by the centers will continue to shrink. That approach – Job Centers never die, they just fade away – may be politically easier, but it will certainly never build a system that can connect workers to the training and skills they need to move ahead. More money committed to rent, in the context of shrinking resources, necessarily means less money to the training and education that our workforce desperately needs.

The consolidation plan before you today is a necessary response to the federal financial reality. It is easy to identify the costs of this plan of proactive consolidation and greater use of technology. But the costs of not consolidating infrastructure are no less critical, just because they are harder to observe. At this point, given the long-term funding decline, the consolidation proposed is the best option in a difficult situation. The proposal will not create only winners, but in the long run, the new system will hopefully have the efficiency and resources to reach workers with the mix of resources they will need in order to build skills and obtain family-supporting jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



This moment, however, is a critical one also to consider the state commitment to workforce development infrastructure and systems. The state of Wisconsin could and will lead and innovate in this area, especially if state resources were committed to a system of training and skill development for all the state's workers.

Thanks for your time and consideration,

Laura Dresser  
1344 Jenifer Street





July 8, 2008

Dear Members of the Legislature,

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works with people with disabilities to help them to obtain, maintain and improve employment. The vocational rehabilitation services provided by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are not contingent on our offices being located within any of the Job Center locations.

Services provided to consumers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are frequently provided outside of the Job Center, and can be provided at any location that is convenient or necessary for the consumer. Consumers working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are often served outside of the Job Center for a variety of reasons, including location of the consumer, disability-related transportation issues, health issues, and general convenience of the consumer.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation consumers are provided services from locations that include their homes, mutually agreed upon public locations, i.e., libraries, high schools, and other locations that are convenient and agreed upon by the consumer.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is able to serve these consumers from locations outside of the Job Center through the use of technology. This technology includes Tablet computers with internet access, which enables vocational rehabilitation counselors to access records pertaining to consumers and their vocational rehabilitation plans. This mobile computer and internet access also allow counselors to provide information to assist consumers in accessing employment information such as Wisconsin Job Net and labor market information.

I hope this information has been helpful and informative to you in how the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is able to provide services to consumers outside of the Job Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Schnapp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Schnapp, M.S., LPC  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor  
(608) 242-4925  
e-mail: [michael.schnapp@dwd.state.wi.us](mailto:michael.schnapp@dwd.state.wi.us)



*From Pat Schramm - I needed to leave.  
will email to committee*

July 8, 2008

## **Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor, Education and Public Affairs**

Good morning – I am Pat Schramm, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board of South Central WI

Thank you for taking the time today start to examine the issue of financial support for the Workforce Development System.

For us, the discussion on the impact on Job Center restructuring is at least 2 years too late.

What you are hearing my colleagues describe, as their current downsizing dilemma was our situation 10 fold 2 1/2 years ago.

I represent the Madison, Dane County and surrounding 5 counties – 5 of our six counties have significant population centers of a minimum of 70,000 people – Dane County with 450,000.

2 1/2 years ago we had 6 healthy job centers strategically positioned in each of our 6 counties. But our centers' financial support strategy was built on W2 funds. In October 2005 – W2 funds in our region were reduced by 40% this resulted in a Job Center staff downsizing of 70 plus people.

That was a wakeup call for us. We strategically re-aligned our funds and service delivery system – with 2 months notice to our partners (basically a temporary strategy to keep the boat afloat) and began to look for new service models and partnerships that would enable us as a 6 county region to establish a Job Center system that will deliver to industry the trained workforce that they need to be viable.

As I believe you have received from several of the South Central Board members – we have been intently re-designing our system for about 18 months. We have done this with financial tectonic plates shifting.

- Our public resources shrinking
- A State labor freeze on critical positions that we need to deliver workforce development services
- An Economy that is falling apart at the seams.

We have basically employed the same strategy that DWD has – we got an earlier start – we do not have labor union contracts to navigate – but we have consolidated and re-aligned our resources.

STATES  
THAT HAVE  
RE-ALIGNED

Throughout our re-engineering we have worked very closely with our local Job Service Management to understand what the personnel and financial stresses that were/are at play for our Job Service Partner.

FOR  
EFFECTIVE  
WORKFORCE  
DEV.

I believe that we are at a critical time for our State – we are already on the clock – as to the number of workers leaving the workforce – compared to the number entering – we need to have an effective and financially viable workforce development system. Not one where the professional who are trying to manage the current system are struggling over where to deploy the crumbs.

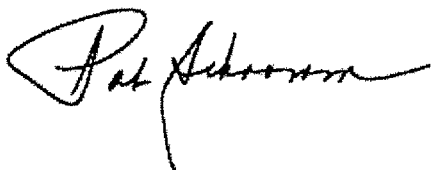
Wash  
\* Oreg  
Minn  
\* Penn

We need a State funding strategy that does not count on the Federal Government to help, regardless of which party is in office.

We need to look to our Midwest neighbors, many who have created state based funding streams to support their workforce development systems.

If we do this – when a partner needs to re-organize its resources which is what most viable businesses these days do on a 3 year cycle – we will not be in such a crisis mode – we will have the resources to make calculated and deliberate decisions.

Thank you for listening.



Pat Schramm, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin.



Testimony Provided by  
Dr. Robert T. Borremans  
To The Wisconsin Senate  
Committee on Labor Elections and Urban Affairs  
Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Good morning/afternoon Senator Coggs and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposal by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to consolidate Job Service into 12 urban locations.

My name is Bob Borremans. I am the executive director of the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board. We serve 6 counties in Southwest Wisconsin – Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland and Rock.

Back in 2004, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) reported that Wisconsin had lost almost 60% of its federal workforce development and training funds over the 20 year period from 1984 to 2004. This is important because federal funds pay most of the workforce development system costs; with virtually no state funds supporting the system. Continued federal cuts over the last four years have only made the problem bigger.

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The future sustainability of workforce services is in jeopardy and that, in turn, impacts the quality of the Wisconsin's workforce. We need a clear vision and broad-based strategy to address the problem. Had DWD engaged the workforce development community sooner in a real systematic problem solving and planning process, I believe, we could have developed a more acceptable plan. Instead, we find ourselves reacting to this plan with seemingly no other options.

I believe this proposal goes beyond consolidating Job Service staff. It begins to dismantle the infrastructure of a workforce development system that has served all of Wisconsin for more than twenty years without the upfront, broad-based input of required system partners. In doing so, it passes costs down to partner agencies, many of them taxed support organizations struggling to sustain services with declining resources. Organizations that cannot afford the increased costs! It is a plan, I believe, that will eventually



force the closure of most job centers statewide denying access to services for thousands of job seekers, many in rural communities.

DWD will say that they do not close Job Centers only regional workforce boards have that authority. They will claim that they are only one of many service providers in a job center. But, DWD is not just another partner agency in a job center. They are the State cabinet-level agency designated to carry out the programmatic requirements of the Workforce Investment Act in Wisconsin. As such they have the power to determine policy and procedures that affect the ability of local workforce boards to deliver services.

In making her announcement, the secretary's own words talk about the steps that will be taken to "transform our employment and training services to best meet the needs of Wisconsin's workers and employers in the 21st century." In reading those words, I hear a cabinet secretary commenting on system change. So, to me, this plan goes beyond one partner agency needing to improve efficiency by consolidating services.

As service delivery sites are closed, DWD will implement mobile services emanating from the 12 regional hubs. So, instead of keeping services in the communities, DWD will make staff travel back to those communities to provide services. I question whether the high cost of travel reimbursement, greater fuel consumption and increased non-productive "windshield time" are truly a more efficient use of resources and warrants abandoning long-established community-based service sites. I also question the long-term commitment to mobile services as gasoline prices increase to \$5.00 and \$ 6.00 per gallon.

I do support the increased use of technology and the virtual job center concept included in the proposal. In fact, SWWDB pioneered the idea of a virtual job center. Working with 3 other workforce boards – North Central, Northwest and Bay Area – we developed a virtual job center website almost 3 years ago using a grant from DWD. The four workforce boards have contributed thousands of their own dollars to develop and market this website. At this stage, [www.jobcenter.org](http://www.jobcenter.org) is a good information portal,

receiving 5,100 hits last month alone, but it needs additional work to be the type of virtual service center we envision.

We have extended an open invitation to partner with DWD to build a more robust site. But, DWD seems intent on creating a new virtual job center. It is unfortunate that DWD plans to start over when so much effort and resources have been expended developing and marketing the current jobcenter.org site. And, since DWD has not yet started work on the site, I am skeptical that they will be able to roll out a new, statewide virtual job center by their September 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. I am further concerned that this important cornerstone of DWD's consolidation plan is not yet functional. Moving ahead with consolidation, without an operational virtual job center, further removes services and limits access to a majority of the State's job seekers.

And, finally, let's not overlook the impact this proposal will have on the people who use job centers. A large portion of this population lacks basic academic and workforce skills. DWD's own figures show that 40% of Wisconsin's workforce, age 26 and older, holds only a high school diploma or are high school dropouts. These workers require greater levels of personalized assistance. They need case managed support services to prepare for and compete in today's global economy. Personal intervention and one-on-one assistance is one of the most successful features of the current workforce delivery system. Consolidating services to the proposed 12 locations removes the opportunity to access critically important workforce services for those individuals who need help the most. It will constrict many job seekers to a future of low-skill, low-wage jobs and threatens the economic viability of rural communities in Wisconsin.

Are improvements and efficiencies needed in the system and should change be implemented. In my opinion, the answer is yes. But I see change coming through open dialogue involving the required partners to create a clear vision for service delivery that addresses the needs of all areas of the State. I know I and the other workforce partners would welcome that opportunity.

I thank you for your time and attention.



July 8, 2008

To: Senator Coggs, Chair, Senator Wirch, Vice-chair, and  
Senator Lehman, Senator Grothman, and Senator Lasee, members of the Senate  
Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs

From: Laurie Mlatawou, Disability Rights Wisconsin

Subject: **Department of Workforce Development Job Center Consolidation**

Disability Rights Wisconsin is the Protection and Advocacy agency for the state of Wisconsin. Our mandate under federal and state law is to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Wisconsin.

We have serious concerns that the equipment and services of the consolidated Job Centers may not be accessible to people with disabilities.

Through our work we have discovered numerous barriers that prevent people with disabilities from using the Job Centers' services. For example, on one recent visit to a Job Center in a large urban area, we found that the accessible computer workstation designated for use by people with disabilities was not even functioning. It sat unplugged and broken, and Job Center staff were not aware of any timeline for its repair. After Disability Rights Wisconsin made the Job Center aware of this problem and the computer was repaired, we discovered that the computer did not have accessible software installed nor did it have essential adaptive technology such as a large track-ball mouse. In addition to all these problems, the workstation was located in the DVR waiting area, a location lacking any privacy.

Each week, hundreds of people use the computers at the Job Centers. These computer workstations are an important part of the Job Center's primary role -- to assist job seekers in finding employment. In addition, we have learned of other accessibility problems at Job Centers, including refusal to make reasonable accommodations to permit consumers with disabilities to access Job Center trainings and workshops.

It is vital that our Job Centers serve jobseekers with disabilities. People with disabilities face additional barriers to gaining and remaining employed and experience a high rate of unemployment. For example, in 2006, only 43% of working-age adults with disabilities in Wisconsin were employed, as compared to 84% of non-disabled Wisconsin adults.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is critical that the Job Centers fully comply with both state and federal accessibility laws and do as much as they can to break down the considerable barriers for people with disabilities to find employment in Wisconsin.

As recipients of federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor and other federal sources, the Job Centers must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, Disability Demographics and Statistics.

Americans with Disabilities Act. The Job Centers must also abide by specific regulations on nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for services provided under the Workforce Investment Act (29 CFR Part 37), also known as WIA 188.

This means that computer workstations and all other Job Center services must be accessible to people with disabilities, and Job Center front desk staff should be trained to assist consumers in using its accessible technology and services.

Job Centers must ensure that consumers with cognitive or developmental disabilities are able to fully access services and participate in programs. Job Center written materials should be reviewed to ensure that they are easily understandable. Customers should be made aware that staff members are trained and able to help fill out forms or read them aloud as a reasonable accommodation upon request.

Barriers to Job Center programs and services can also include basic physical accessibility. The Job Centers must ensure that all pathways and interior routes be wide and free of obstructions. There must be ramps, handrails and curb cuts, as well as accessible passenger loading areas, parking spaces, and entrances. Bathrooms and meeting rooms must be accessible and in compliance with federal and state laws.

Another factor in consolidation of the Job Centers is that it will require additional travel from consumers. For people with disabilities, this is not a simple matter of increased cost and time. Many people with disabilities do not have access to accessible transportation, particularly in rural areas of Wisconsin which do not have public transportation systems.

We suggest that the Job Centers take a proactive approach to ensure that transportation barriers do not prevent consumers with disabilities from utilizing services. For example, the state could work with Medicaid transportation providers to reimburse consumers with disabilities for their travel expenses to and from the Job Centers.

To ensure that all Job Centers are fully accessible to customers with disabilities, Disability Rights Wisconsin asks that accessibility assessments be conducted as soon as possible using the WIA Section 188 Disability Checklist. This will assist Job Centers in identifying aspects of their operations that are not yet accessible to people with disabilities. **A critical component of this process is to have a timeline to correct any access barriers identified using the checklist.** Since the Job Centers last conducted these surveys over four years ago, it is important that they recognize both the progress made since the last survey, and the urgency of the work yet to be done to comply with the law and provide true equal opportunity for all consumers.

**The Job Center system is required to have anticipated the needs of people with disabilities in the physical design of centers, as well as the design of services.**

Disability Rights Wisconsin would be happy to provide technical information to each of the Job Centers and their local workforce boards so that they may become fully accessible to people with disabilities as soon as possible.



**TESTIMONY  
JOB CENTER CLOSINGS  
SEN. LABOR COMMITTEE  
Senator Dave Hansen  
JULY 8, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you for taking time to hold this public hearing today on the proposal by the Department of Workforce Development to consolidate the number of Job Centers 12 urban centers.

This is a very important issue to my constituents in Northeast Wisconsin, especially in the northern part of my district in and around the communities of Oconto, Peshtigo and Marinette.

It is also very important because these closings are coming at a time when the national economy is starting to impact our state in negative ways—one of those ways being job loss--and on the heels of the Niagara Mill closing which was a significant provider of family-supporting jobs.

I understand that the department is trying to respond to continued cuts in federal support and they are trying to make the centers and the agency more efficient.

I think nearly everyone here would agree that our fiscal situation would be better if Wisconsin received its fair share of

support from the federal government and that state agencies should be doing all they can right now to cut costs and be more efficient.

But I am concerned that in their efforts to accomplish those goals DWD has lost sight of one of their key missions: to help us make sure that every person who wants to work can find work.

And in this instance it appears that the desire for efficiency and costs savings has lost sight to some degree of that mission. Because it is difficult to see from what we know of this consolidation just how this is better for the people in the northern part of my district who are out of work and are trying to find a job.

- flexibility important - didn't hear that before

At a time when gas prices are at an all-time high it does not seem right that we should expect people in places like Marinette, which are over 50 miles from the closest Job Center to now have the additional burden of traveling those hundred miles each way to get the assistance their tax dollars are helping pay for.



This consolidation does not appear to take into account the needs of people with disabilities and the added difficulty this consolidation will now place on their attempts to find work.

Nor does it appear to take into account older workers who may not have access to a computer or have the skills to successfully use the internet in their job search without assistance.

*- good to hear about mobility - not mentioned before*

By all accounts in talking with my constituents the Job Center and its staff in Marinette were well-regarded and a valuable resource. They were helpful and they were accessible.

Unfortunately, under this consolidation plan they are no longer accessible to a great many of my constituents and therefore less helpful.

I have tried to understand the reasons for this consolidation plan, to learn how this is supposed to actually help improve my constituents' chances of finding work and how it is going to be better for the people the Job Centers are supposed to serve.

I am afraid, however, that this isn't about improving the ability of the Job Centers to help the people we are here to serve but simply a plan designed to reduce costs and cut spending.

I hope I am wrong and that I can be convinced that this is in the best interests of my constituents. However, at this point I would prefer to see the Job Centers remain as they were prior to this consolidation effort or at the very least see its implementation delayed until the economy improves and the threat of job loss has passed.

Thank you.





# Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**DWD Job Center Consolidation**  
**Rep. Jeff Mursau**  
**Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs**  
**July 8, 2008**

Chairman Coggs and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to talk about the Dept. of Workforce Development (DWD) Job Center Consolidation. It is my opinion that removing services from the Marinette Job Center will be counterproductive to developing and maintaining economic growth in my district.

The services available at the Marinette Job Center have played a crucial role in assisting displaced workers and veterans in Marinette County. In these times of economic hardships, I would hope that maintaining active employment assistance in remote areas of Wisconsin would be a top priority. Especially with the closing of the Niagara Paper Mill dislocating more than 300 workers, my constituents need Job Center services now more than ever.

Although it's been stated that DWD will save more than \$37,000 annually in rent costs by vacating the Marinette Job Center location, I have yet to see a plan showing how those savings will be distributed. While DWD has promised to "aggressively reach out to customers wherever they may be," I remain skeptical. With fuel prices as high as they are, it will be excessively expensive for my constituents to travel all the way to Green Bay for the Job Services they desperately need. I also believe that it is an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars to take these services 'mobile,' as opposed to maintaining operation of the Marinette Job Center.

If funds aren't available to retain Job Services in Marinette, it does not seem very likely that funds are available to achieve the level of 'mobile' services that are needed in my district.



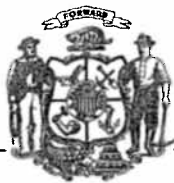
# Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Rep. Nygren and I have called on Gov. Doyle to direct DWD to keep Job Service staff in the Marinette Job Center. It is our duty to our constituents to make sure they have the resources available to help them seek employment. In a troubled economic time like this when employment is already so difficult to find in rural areas, it is unacceptable to remove such a valuable resource as the Marinette Job Center.

I am glad to entertain questions of the committee. Thank you.





# JULIE LASSA

## STATE SENATOR

Department of Workforce Development Job Service Consolidation Testimony  
Senate Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs  
Tuesday, July 8, 2008  
11:00 AM  
411 South

Chairman Coggs and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to discuss my concerns over the consolidation of the Job Service locations, which will affect four offices in my district: those in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids.

The assistance provided by Job Service staffers in these areas has been very successful in promoting Job Service's mission "to ensure that high quality public labor exchange and targeted program services are made easily available to all job seekers and employers." At a time when the economy is struggling and companies are issuing layoff notices, the Job Service has provided workers with the resources they need to find new jobs and training opportunities.

Between January 1 and April 30 of this year, 2,940 job seekers visited the four locations in my district. I can only imagine that number has drastically grown considering that within the last month two paper mills have let go or announced layoffs of over 700 employees in Wood County alone. Of the 500 displaced workers from Domtar Industries, which just shut down its plant in Port Edwards, one-in-five were veterans.

I am certain that along with most of their coworkers visiting with Job Service staffers to improve their skills and learn of employment opportunities, these veterans will take advantage of the Job Service's VA Representatives located at the convenient Job Center locations in Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point.

I understand that the Department of Workforce Development will attempt to address the needs of my constituents by using centralized regional office hubs and creating a new virtual job center. While I appreciate the department's efforts to be cost-efficient, unfortunately, I believe that these actions will ultimately hurt the individuals who depend on these programs for their livelihoods. Many of my constituents who rely on Job Service's resources reside in rural areas with limited internet accessibility and transportation.

Finding ways for these individuals to make their way to Madison or Wausau when they are unemployed or underemployed given rising gas prices is quite a deterrent and I fear it will prevent many from being able to take advantage of Job Service's newly consolidated and improved resources. Similarly, while the internet provides great opportunities for some individuals either in their homes or at public libraries, it is not as beneficial to those who do not know how to utilize these resources. I recently learned from Port Edwards Village President Ed Saylor that DWD recently sponsored a training session at Mid State Technical College for displaced mill workers and of the 25 workers who attended, 15 had never used a computer before. Mr. Saylor said that a recent analysis of displaced worker skills in South Wood County confirms that this issue is widespread among the displaced paper mill workers. I am worried that while DWD offers technical support to assist these workers, many will not even know that such assistance is available to them.

I understand the need to consolidate resources given the limited federal funds, but I am deeply concerned that this decision will negatively affect my constituents who are already at risk due to disabilities, military service, and plant closings. I hope that given the economic challenges facing Central Wisconsin DWD will reconsider its decision to close these four offices.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you may have.







# John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

*Harrison  
to give you  
a written  
out of  
July 1*

## TESTIMONY ON THE REGIONALIZATION OF JOB SERVICE Tuesday, July 8, 2008

*Closures*

Good Morning Chairman Coggs and committee members. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in front of you today regarding the regionalization of job service across Wisconsin. In my district, the Marinette Job Center through Job Service programs such as Veterans Employment Assistance, Trade Act case management and Job Services and other related programs assists dislocated workers. Back in March of this year, I was contacted by a constituent who had heard job service might be leaving the Marinette Job Center. I immediately contacted the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) regarding the situation. DWD assured me and I quote, "We currently have two DWD Job Service staff whose time is committed to serving dislocated workers. They will remain stationed in Marinette. We will also make other staff available at the center on an itinerant basis to assist in serving people who need services." I then met with Jim Golembeski, Executive Director of the Bay Area Workforce Development Board in April to discuss the situation and voice my concerns.

*Marinette  
to the Bay  
Area Workforce  
Development Board*

At that time, there were little details pertaining to DWD's plan to regionalize services. Mr. Golembeski continued to keep me up to date as the plan to regionalize services evolved. In May, Mr. Golembeski contacted me to inform me DWD had decided to break their commitment to "have two DWD Job Service staff remain stationed in Marinette." I was then contacted by Marinette County Administrator Steve Corbeille and other area community leaders who voiced their concern about the impact this would have on dislocated workers throughout the region. Mr. Corbeille voiced his concerns by stating, "Caseloads for services provided from the Marinette Job Center continue to grow during these difficult economic times and the decision to regionalize services might appear to be good on paper, but in practice will hinder the delivery of services to Marinette County residents seeking employment assistance."

Last month, I received a letter from DWD outlining their plan to regionalize job service. Their plan entailed creating a new virtual job center and taking services "mobile". I have several strong objections to DWD's plan to regionalize job service. They have already broken previous commitments to continue to keep two staffers in the Marinette Job Center. Therefore, it is logical to question DWD's commitments outlined in their June 5<sup>th</sup> letter.

It has been said the Department of Workforce Development will save roughly \$37,000 in leasing costs at the Marinette Job Center by relocating job service and staff to Green Bay. I have questioned the Department of Workforce Development as to where the \$37,000 savings will go and have received no answer. I am concerned that the savings will be reallocated to the Regional



# John Nygren

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 89<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Job Centers like Green Bay when the money would best be spent in maintaining residency in rural job centers like Marinette.

As gas prices continue to rise, the regionalization of job assistance programs impose an increased burden on those in need of these services. Instructing individuals to drive to regional offices or have Job Service staff drive to rural communities is simply not a fiscally responsible option for the state.

DWD has stated that the relocation of these services is the result of a decrease in federal funding. If that is the case, then where are they going to get the money to take job service “mobile”? If money does not exist to keep job service in the Marinette Job Center and other rural Job Centers, then where will the money come from to pay for the gas and the time lost during the commute to and from the service site? It stands to reason that it would be a waste and mismanagement of taxpayer dollars to take these services “mobile” in lieu of maintaining residence in rural Job Centers. The logical assumption is DWD has given a false promise of going “mobile” and that the onus will be on dislocated workers to spend money they don’t have to get the job assistance they need. The costs associated with taking job service “mobile” to provide assistance to displaced workers will certainly result in a reduction of services at an increased cost.

Representative Mursau and I voiced these concerns in our May 28<sup>th</sup> letter to Governor Doyle requesting the Governor to direct Secretary Gassman of the Department of Workforce Development to allocate the necessary funding to keep job service in the Marinette Job Center. I believe it is our responsibility as legislators to ensure displaced workers in our districts have all the tools necessary to help them find employment. At a time with the economy heading toward a recession and unemployment levels rising, people around the state are in need of these services more than ever.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.