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## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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### BUILDING WISCONSIN'S WORKFORCE

Room 412 East, State Capitol  
Legislative Council Conference Room  
Madison, Wisconsin

September 23, 2008  
10:00 a.m. – 3:55 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the September 23, 2008 meeting of the Special Committee on Building Wisconsin's Workforce. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

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#### Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Strachota called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Pat Strachota, Chair; Sen. Robert Wirth, Vice Chair; Reps. Gordon Hintz and Mark Honadel; and Public Members Jim Golembeski, John Keckhaver, Mark Kessenich, Steve Mercatis, Peter Thillman, and Judy Warmuth.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sens. Alberta Darling and Robert Jauch; and Public Member Carol Wagenson.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Scott Grosz and Jessica Karls, Staff Attorneys.

APPEARANCES: John Keckhaver, Research Analyst, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families; Jim Golembeski, Executive Director, Bay Area Workforce Development Board; and Dr. Robert T. Borremans, Executive Director, Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board; Linda Stewart, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board; and Mari Kay-Nabozny, Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board.

## **Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's August 18, 2008 Meeting**

The committee unanimously approved the minutes of the August 18, 2008, meeting by voice vote.

### **Presentations by Invited Speakers**

[Note: PowerPoint presentations and other documents referred to by the speakers are posted on the committee's Internet site.]

#### **John Keckhaver, Research Analyst, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.**

Mr. Keckhaver began his presentation by presenting workforce projections that describe an aging workforce, high labor force participation rates, growing gaps between employers' needs and employees' skills, and decreasing relative wages in low-skill employment. Following this background information, Mr. Keckhaver outlined the challenges that exist in efforts to close skill gaps and provide low-skilled employees with more meaningful earning opportunities.

Generally, Mr. Keckhaver identified post-secondary training and credentialing for existing workers as a significant opportunity. However, he noted the need for adult basic education prior to entry into general post-secondary programs, as well as the low success rates for the transition from adult basic education to post-secondary programs.

Mr. Keckhaver identified several reasons for the low transition rates, including family commitments, lack of study time, lack of recent academic experience, and financial constraints. He highlighted several states' efforts to address these issues and noted the need for "bridge" programs and for financial aid.

Following his presentation, Mr. Keckhaver responded to questions from committee members.

#### **Jim Golembeski, Executive Director, Bay Area Workforce Development Board.**

Mr. Golembeski described his experiences working with the Department of Corrections on employment and training programs for offenders. He began with a description of the state corrections system, including incarceration itself, as well as the supervision that often follows. He described the department's "no fraternization" policies and noted the effect these policies have on training and employment efforts. He also noted the role time plays in the ability to train offenders, noting that it is typical for offenders to be incarcerated for less than the time necessary to provide effective worker training prior to release and supervision.

Mr. Golembeski continued his presentation with descriptions of specific employment and training programs he has facilitated, as well as the varying opportunities for training across different types of correctional facilities. He noted that programs that work in some facilities will not succeed in others due to differences in security levels and offender populations. He emphasized the need for continuity of support during the transition from incarceration to supervision, as well as the need to

connect with employers in areas where offenders will be released, not necessarily where they are incarcerated.

Mr. Golembeski also responded to questions from committee members.

**Dr. Robert T. Borremans, Executive Director, Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board; Linda Stewart, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board; and Mari Kay-Nabozny, Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board.**

Dr. Borremans, Ms. Stewart, and Ms. Kay-Nabozny spoke to the committee as representatives of the Southwest Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Boards. Dr. Borremans began the presentation with an overview of Wisconsin's workforce development system. In particular, he highlighted the development of federal workforce development law beginning in the 1930s and moving to the current Workforce Investment Act. After describing the roles and activities of state and local government in workforce development, he noted the relationship between state and federal workforce development funding. Dr. Borremans also highlighted some of the funding challenges the workforce development system will face in coming years.

After the background information presented by Dr. Borremans, Ms. Stewart and Ms. Kay-Nabozny provided a more detailed description of the activities and services offered, respectively, by the Milwaukee Workforce Investment Board and the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board.

Dr. Borremans concluded the presentation with examples of workforce development best practices utilized by other states and highlighted opportunities for future workforce development efforts.

Following their presentation, Dr. Borremans, Ms. Stewart, and Ms. Kay-Nabozny responded to questions from the committee member.

### **Discussion of Committee Assignment**

Following the testimony by invited speakers, the committee began to discuss options for committee recommendations. Prior to the meeting, Legislative Council staff polled members for potential options and compiled those responses in Memo No. 1, *Potential Recommendations Submitted for Consideration by Committee Members*. Using the Memo, Chair Strachota guided the committee through discussions of options related to K-12 and post-secondary education, coordination of efforts among state agencies, coordination of efforts between state agencies and the business community, and other revisions to the workforce development system.

Based on the response of members, the committee decided to further pursue certain options through bill drafts or additional speakers, or both. Those options related to issues including collection of labor force statistics, K-12 curriculum requirements, an audit of workforce development programs, reports to the Legislature on workforce development, and continued discussions with various state agencies.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business brought before the committee.

### **Plans for Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be *Tuesday, October 22, 2008, in the Legislative Council Conference Room, 1 East Main Street, Suite 401, Madison.*

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

SG:ksm