

Gov. Walker: Budget ensures Wisconsin remains a Top 10 state

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Madison - Governor Scott Walker released the following column today calling on Wisconsin citizens who support the top priorities included in his budget - student success, rewarding work, and accountable government - to contact their legislators and urge them to support his proposal. This column is for your consideration to publish.

Budget Ensures Wisconsin Remains a Top 10 State

Good news! Wisconsin has the highest number of people employed in state history.

More good news - the unemployment rate for April is down to 3.2 percent. That is the lowest the unemployment rate has been in Wisconsin since February of 2000 (and close to the all-time record low unemployment). The report also showed that 7,500 private sector jobs were created, and our state led the nation in significant job gains along with Texas and Minnesota last month.

Plus, the percentage of people working in our state went up to 68.6 percent, which is 5.7 points higher than the federal rate. We are a Top 10 state for the percentage of our adults in the labor force.

Wisconsin is in the Top 10 in other areas, too.

Our students are in the Top 10 for ACT scores in states where all of the students take the exam. Wisconsin ranks in the Top 10 for high school graduation rates.

In my budget plan, we include the largest actual dollar investment in K-12 education ever. We increase state aid for our technical colleges and the University of Wisconsin System. And we continue to hold the line on tuition to make college more affordable for students and working families.

We are in the Top 10 states for reducing our overall tax burden. Specifically, from 2010 to 2014, we outranked 43 other states in this area.

In my budget plan, we continue our tax relief. Property and income taxes will both be lower in 2018 than they were in 2010. In fact, we actually eliminate an entire tax. If approved, the state tax on your property tax bill will be gone.

We are in the Top 10 for fully-funded pension systems. Wisconsin ranks in the Top 10 for the lowest outstanding long-term debt.

In my budget plan, we have the lowest level of transportation bonding since the 2001-2003 state budget and the lowest overall bonding in 20 years. On top of that, our rainy day fund is 178 times larger than it was when we first took office.

We are in the Top 10 for access to health care coverage for our citizens. In fact, the Kaiser Family Foundation said we had no insurance gap and Wisconsin is the only state that did not take the Obamacare expansion that is in the Top 10 for coverage. Wisconsin's health care systems also rank in the Top 10 in the nation.

Recently, Wisconsin moved into the Top 10 rankings for places to do business. In 2010, Wisconsin ranked 41st in the nation for business according to the rankings of Chief Executive Magazine. In 2017, for the first time ever, we moved up to the Top 10.

As the economy continues to improve here in Wisconsin, we must do more to build a strong workforce. Last week alone, there were more than 100,000 jobs openings on our state website JobCenterOfWisconsin.com.

Our budget helps to build a strong workforce by investing in student success. We reform welfare to reward work. And we make government more accountable so we can continue to lower the tax burden on our hard-working taxpayers. If these are goals you share, I ask you to contact your state Representative and your state Senator. Let know that your values are reflected in the priorities of our budget.