

Rep. Brooks: Rural legislators announce workforce package

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Madison, WI – Following the adoption of several Rural Wisconsin Initiative (RWI) health care bills in the budget, out state legislators are looking to build on that success by passing a package of bills to further bolster the state's workforce. The package includes four bills, of which, Rep. Ed Brooks (R-Reedsburg) is authoring LRB 2330.

Maintaining the current population alone is not enough to reverse the population stagnation trend in rural Wisconsin. The state must also attract young workers from out of state. To that end, Rep. Brooks proposes LRB 2330, the creation of rural opportunity zones. This is mirrored after a concept pioneered in Kansas and Oklahoma which would incentivize young people looking to relocate after finishing their post-secondary education.

The Wisconsin version of the rural opportunity zones would include a repayment incentive of up to \$25,000 or 40% of a new resident's student loans, provided the new resident maintains a full time job, avoids public assistance, has a post-secondary degree, and settles in a county that fits the Federal OMB's definition of rural.

The other bills in the RWI package include:

- LRB 0486 would allow students to earn credit toward an apprenticeship for work

completed during high school

- LRB 2115 enables school districts to exceed revenue caps commensurate with investments made in capital infrastructure used in technical education (such as welding machines)
- LRB 5038 creates a tax deduction for certain apprenticeship tuition expenses

“I’m excited to continue the work of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative and, specifically, to give the workforce in rural Wisconsin a boost,” said Rep. Brooks.

To learn more about the Rural Wisconsin Initiative, please visit www.RuralWisconsinInitiative.com.