

Vinehout campaign: Proposes free tuition for tech colleges and two-year campuses

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Legislation to make tuition free at the state's technical colleges and two-year campuses was unveiled Monday by Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, D-Alma.

"Expanding our skilled workforce is the surest way to grow our economy and raise wages which are 18th lowest in the country," Vinehout said. "Other states that have moved in this direction have seen enrollments increase."

Vinehout's proposal would make tuition free for all Wisconsin residents. It would apply to all students, both full-time and part-time and would not require enrollment in a degree program.

"What I am proposing today is the broadest free tuition program in the country," Vinehout said. "I want to eliminate any hesitation anyone might have in pursuing their opportunities and dreams.

"I want to make it as easy as possible for someone who is already working or has family obligations, doesn't have the cash and can't afford to take time off, to get the education and training they want. I call it 'Freedom to Learn'".

Vinehout cited her own experience growing up. "I was on my own after high school, working full time and my only option was the local two-year college."

The cost of the program is estimated to be between \$300 and \$350 million. Vinehout proposes to pay for it by repealing the Manufacturing Tax Credit. “One of the common complaints I hear from business leaders is that they can’t find skilled workers to fill the jobs they have. Trading their tax break for a pool of skilled workers seems to me a good exchange, particularly since corporate profits and corporate cash reserves are at an all-time high and wages are stagnant.”

“Investing in the potential of our own workers will be more productive than trying to lure workers from other states or giving billions to one foreign corporation.”

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