

Walker seeks to launch ad campaign to attract workers to Wisconsin

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Gov. Scott Walker Wednesday announced he'll ask the Legislature to approve \$6.8 million in taxpayer money for an advertising campaign aimed at attracting workers to Wisconsin.

Walker, who made the announcement at WMC's Future Wisconsin Summit in Madison, said the effort would be aimed at three key groups: Midwest millennials, Wisconsin alumni and military vets and their families.

He said the plan would grow the state workforce, emphasizing the importance of going "beyond our borders" to attract and retain more talent in Wisconsin.

Walker also said the state needs to "harness that excitement" that comes with major employers like Foxconn and Haribo coming to the state.

"It's not enough just to give speeches and talks — we've got to put a whole campaign behind this — both earned and paid media along the way," he said.

The co-chairs of the Joint Finance Committee said they're open to the plan, though they'd like to see details.

Dems, though, knocked the proposal, questioning whether it was a good use of taxpayer money and noting past Walker decisions such as opposing federal money for a high-speed rail line between Madison and Milwaukee that could have helped attract some of the workers he's now hoping to target.

Outagamie County Exec Tom Nelson, a former Dem lawmaker, has been pressing Walker on assistance for the Fox Valley region, particularly amid struggles for the paper industry. That includes the sale of Appleton Coated in September to Assets Corp., a California-based liquidation and auction company. That resulted in layoffs and the possibility the plant will shut down.

"\$7m 4 TV ads?! What about \$ to help Appleton Coated & WI Paper industry keep & create jobs here?" Nelson tweeted.

The campaign would be a joint effort by WEDC, the DWD and the Department of Tourism.

A big part of the advertising campaign would be aimed at Chicago, a magnet for many skilled young workers. And as Walker noted, there's quite a bit of overlap between the millennial population and alumni of Wisconsin universities.

"When they've got the excitement, they love the big city, they love the big job, then suddenly they get more serious about thinking about families some day, where they're going to settle down, what all that is going to cost ... That's a great time for us," he said.

Advertisements both digital and traditional would highlight the shorter commute times, lower cost of living and wealth of outdoor activities available in Wisconsin.

One example provided contrasted a crowded city bus with two bikers on a sunny forest trail, highlighting the shorter commute times. Another compared a "shoebox on the third floor... or loft in the third ward," emphasizing the lower cost to rent in Wisconsin compared to Chicago.

Transitioning vets and their families are "critically important" to target, according to Walker, who said Wisconsin has the largest number of benefits for veterans of any state.

He says "we haven't done enough" to tell out-of-state veterans about what's available in Wisconsin, adding that they represent a "well-trained, well-disciplined, well-focused" workforce with "tremendous skills and ability."

"This is a prime market for us," Walker said.

Tricia Braun, COO for WEDC, says the Chicago-area paid media campaign would run between January and March. And a campaign targeting veterans would be built out in the next few months in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Tourism and Workforce Development, with a launch anticipated near the end of the first quarter of 2018.

See a sample ad:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Bike-Ride.png>