

WPRI: Wisconsin occupational and teacher licensing is costly and counterproductive

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April 5, 2017 — Wisconsin's occupational licensing regime is burdensome, counterproductive and in urgent need of reform, according to "Government's Love for Licensure," a Special Report published today by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute. The study also analyzes and offers policy recommendations regarding teacher licensure in the state.

"Licensure is often more about reducing competition than safeguarding consumers," wrote Ike Brannon and Logan Albright, who co-authored the report's analysis of occupational licensing in Wisconsin. State-mandated skills tests and certification requirements, they concluded, impose unnecessary burdens on job-seekers, drive up consumer costs, stifle innovation and produce a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and minority populations.

"The thousands of Wisconsinites who aspire to better jobs aren't asking anything of state government except that it get out of the way," said WPRI President Mike Nichols. "Unfortunately, occupational licensing over the years has morphed from limited and justifiable public safety precautions to a means of employing the power of the state to fence potential competitors out of certain fields. Entrepreneurial Wisconsinites should not require a government permission slip to work."

In 1950, licensed professionals made up just 5 percent of the workforce; the number of Americans now required to secure a license to do their job is closer to 30 percent.

The Special Report also determined that the teacher labor market is distorted by licensure rules that deter college students and trained professionals in other fields from entering the teaching profession. An analysis by Scott Niederjohn and Mark Schug identifies market distortions caused by teacher licensure rules and suggests that, among other things, policy-makers repeal the current rules established by the Department of Public Instruction, simplify the process for teachers certified in other states to become licensed in Wisconsin, allow districts to develop their own teacher licensure programs and streamline charter schools' ability to make hiring decisions.

Nichols will testify Thursday, April 6, before the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing & State-Federal Relations on two bills designed to scale back licensing requirements in the areas of cosmetology and barbering. The hearing will be held in Room 411 South at the Capitol and is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m.

“Government’s Love for Licensure” includes the following stories:

“A Long Ordeal” captures the story of a Milwaukee woman with a Florida beauty school certificate who has waited more than a year trying to get licensed in Wisconsin.

“Cutting to the Chase” highlights a salon owner in northern Wisconsin who describes a system that makes it hard for a small shop like hers to survive.

“There’s the Rub” reveals the onerous continuing education requirements imposed on massage therapists.

WPRI’s Special Report on licensure can be found [here](#). Permission to reprint is granted as long as the author(s) and WPRI are properly cited.

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