

# Palzewicz campaign: Educational outcomes must keep up with new economy

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**Brookfield, WI** - Americans have access to higher education from community colleges to major universities, but are higher education outcomes failing young adults? Democrat Tom Palzewicz, running for Wisconsin's Fifth Congressional District seat, is a staunch believer in education that prepares people for making a living wage.

In decades past, a high school diploma could lead to a good-paying, secure job. However, it is a different world, and the demands for candidates with a college degree is no longer the exception, but the norm. Students leaving high school face higher unemployment rates. There appears to be a disconnect between the classroom and the workplace. Palzewicz believes education needs to connect the dots.

"When the workforce doesn't need workers, what do you do?" Palzewicz asked. "The two times I graduated, I graduated into recessions. When I graduated high school, there was a recession on the horizon. When I graduated from college, there was another recession. And it was interesting because it took a while to make sure that I could find the job that I wanted or at least a job paying enough. But I go back to the idea that education needs to teach critical skills, and we need an educational system meant to deliver workers to business.

"People say degrees should be in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), right? We should be focusing on STEM, but liberal arts degrees are actually one of the best degrees to get for critical thinking. How do we marry those two ideas together? We should teach more entrepreneurship. Like what are your career

paths or what do you want to accomplish? I think any discussion of the economy leads us back to some kind of universal healthcare plan. Because if you're a young person and you don't know what you want to do, it sure would be nice to try two or three different things at the same time."

That was a significant theme in Palzewicz's life after coming out of the Navy and earning a degree at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"I've had to reinvent myself in my career three or four times," said Palzewicz. "And each time was a learning curve. But the only thing I had was, I trusted in my ability to learn because I had done it before. When I went into banking, there was no degree that I could have gotten to teach me how to do risk management for banks, because it was a brand new area at the time. It was right after the S&L crisis of the late 80s. Nobody even knew how to do it.

"When I started my own business, I was a business coach. There weren't thousands of books on how to be a business coach. It was like, okay, figure it out and just trial and error and do it. It would be good if young people had the opportunity to try a bunch of different things.

"A way forward is a national service program that basically takes every single 18-year-old and puts them somewhere for two years. They would get out of their own environment and learn about a different part of the country or a different part of the world. And also meet some people and learn some other skills. I think that would be an invaluable program that we could do a lot of good, especially around infrastructure and education, you name it. If we had that, I think young people would be able to try more things and couple that with a universal healthcare plan. There would be a lot more job mobility, but I think people would be able to find what they're good at and what makes them happy and are passionate about a lot faster."

Palzewicz believes now is the time to act on transitioning from the COVID economy to the new economy. The first step is updating education.