

Business leader on 'UpFront' calls on Evers to end enhanced federal unemployment benefit

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A Wisconsin business leader says Gov. Tony Evers' help is needed both short-term and long-term to solve Wisconsin's worker shortage.

Kurt Bauer, president and CEO of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, called on Evers to end the enhanced federal unemployment benefit of \$300 per week. Bauer said it is not needed.

In an appearance Sunday on "UpFront," produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com, Bauer said there are more jobs available in Wisconsin right now than there are people to fill them.

"There are plenty of jobs out there in the Wisconsin economy, and we need people to get back to work in order for this economy to rebuild after the pandemic," Bauer said.

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Bauer cited WMC's recent economic survey that showed 86 percent of business leaders report they are having trouble hiring, with the greatest needs for skilled and entry-level workers.

"The evidence is overwhelming. We have a problem; we need the governor's help to solve it," Bauer said.

Longer term, he said Wisconsin has a demographic problem. The state is not at replacement birth rates and has seen more people leaving than coming in for decades, Bauer said.

He called on the governor to restore the talent attraction campaign started under former Gov. Scott Walker.

Also on the program, an executive with a Wisconsin hospitality group explained why the company has gone to a \$16- per-hour minimum wage, and is no longer encouraging tipping.

Rita Dorsey, director of experiences for Eau Claire-based Pablo Group, said the group raised the minimum wage to create wage stability for its workers. The discouragement of tipping is a big change from industry standards, she said. The new wage applies to 240 of the group's employees.

"We also employ a whole lot of non-tipped employees who just got an increase in their pay," Dorsey said. "So overall the response has been really positive."

She said the group has raised prices by about 20 percent, but it hasn't received any complaints from customers.

"It's really not much of a difference. Most folks when they are dining out do tip 20 percent. So overall, at the end of the day, your bill isn't going to be that much different, it's just going to look a little different in the way that you pay it out," she said.

In another segment, "UpFront" asked the chairman of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board why he is not stepping aside following the expiration of his term. The NRB sets policy for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The term for Fred Prehn, a Wausau dentist appointed to the board by Walker, expired May 1. Evers has nominated a replacement, Sandra Naas of Ashland, but she has been unable to take her seat since Prehn refuses to step down.

Prehn said the law allows him to stay on until the Senate confirms his successor. Prehn told the program he will stay on the board as long as he desires.

"I provide good leadership for the citizens of Wisconsin. I lead the board through difficult debates and consensus. I await Senate confirmation for the appointee," Prehn said in a statement to "UpFront."

Several people spoke out against Prehn's actions at the NRB meeting last Wednesday.

“This is a despicable political tactic and wrong. Natural resources are too important to fall victim to politics,” said Laura Lane, Sierra Club Wisconsin chapter chair.

“UpFront” asked the offices of Republican Senate President Chris Kapenga and Republican Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu when the chamber would take up confirmation of Evers’ NRB appointees. Neither office would give the program an answer.

See more from the program [here](#).