

John Imes: Infrastructure bills will broaden Wisconsin's prosperity

Posted on Monday, Aug 9, 2021

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

I recently participated with the American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC) during virtual D.C. fly-in meetings with ten members of Congress including Rep. Mark Pocan (WI) and legislative staff from offices on both sides of the aisle.

I'm working with ASBC because they are the leading organization representing the policy interests of responsible companies and their stakeholders. ASBC makes the business case for policies that enable a more just, resilient, and sustainable economy that works for all.

That's why ASBC members are urging Congress to pass both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework and the \$3.5 trillion Reconciliation Bill to strengthen the middle class, address climate change, update our infrastructure, ensure income equality, and support clean water, and regenerative agriculture.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

For example, ASBC strongly advocates for national paid family & medical leave and guaranteed childcare to provide working families with the support they need to participate fully in today's economy.

Addressing climate change is another priority by boosting renewables and energy efficiency under a strict Clean Energy Standard, plus advancing electric vehicles, and modernized high-speed rail. An "electric vehicle highway" of fast-charging stations across the state, for example, would give Wisconsin a competitive "Travel Green" tourism advantage.

Workforce development provisions include a Climate Conservation Corps and green job training that provides more opportunities for low-income communities and communities of color. Workers at Wisconsin's 354 clean energy supply companies would also benefit, including electricians, pipefitters, construction laborers and factory workers.

We also urged that the bills include provisions for regenerative agriculture and regional food systems that can help revitalize rural Wisconsin with more funding for conservation, research, forestry, supply chain resilience and programs that advance more equitable agriculture. Improving soil health can improve farmer's profits per acre, improve farm resiliency during extreme weather and reduce economic and environmental risks.

Making critical water infrastructure investments to improve access to clean water is another priority, including low-income water assistance. Milwaukee's position as a global water hub would be enhanced as it brings together industry, research, and academia to foster new technologies and more sustainable water use. Projections show that making the necessary water infrastructure investments could increase water-related business by \$5.6 trillion over the next 20 years and create approximately 1.3 million jobs each year.

Finally, the bills provide over \$6 billion to repair and rebuild Wisconsin roads and bridges, making our transportation infrastructure more resilient and safer for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians, and help provide funding to expand broadband coverage across the state to bridge the digital divide, particularly in rural and underserved urban areas.

We can't afford business as usual and politics as usual when it comes to building back a better Wisconsin and a more resilient economy that works for all. For the sake of Wisconsin's future, please urge your representatives to pass both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework and the Budget Reconciliation Plan.

- Imes is executive director of Wisconsin Environmental Initiative and a member of the ASBC Climate and Energy Working Group.