

# Construction Business Group: MJS, Wisconsin's clean energy goals could grow state's economy by \$21 billion, but state lags Midwest counterparts

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WISCONSIN – Last week, the Midwest Economic Policy Institute (MEPI), in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, released a new report examining burgeoning utility-scale renewable energy development. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel was the first to report on the study's findings.

The original reporting by Corinne Hess can be viewed [at this link](#). (*subscription required*)

The full report – “Building Good Local Jobs on Utility-Scale Clean Energy Projects in Wisconsin: The Impact of High-Road Labor and Contracting Standards” can be found [here](#).

In the Executive Summary of the report, the authors note key takeaways:

- Wisconsin significantly lags neighboring states in clean energy production, but large utility companies have committed to becoming carbon-neutral by 2050.
- The clean energy sector is expected to be a major job creator of the next decade, but Wisconsin may not fully capitalize if a substantial number of these projects are awarded to developers who use non-local workers.
- In the face of a national labor shortage, utility companies and developers in Wisconsin face strong competition in attracting, developing, and retaining skilled local workers on the path to 100 percent clean energy.

The MEPI/UW-Whitewater analysis looked closely at workforce issues, finding;

- In Wisconsin, union worksites are 33 percent less likely to have Occupational Safety and Health Administration violations and have 59 percent fewer violations per inspection than nonunion worksites.
- Union contractors are 14 percent less likely to experience difficulty filling craft positions and 21 percent less likely to have project delays.
- There is little to no cost difference between union projects and nonunion projects, especially after accounting for productivity, training, and safety.

The Journal Sentinel reporting notes how ambitious Wisconsin's goals for growing the clean energy sector are, with report authors tying the challenge back to workforce issues.

“Wilson believes if Wisconsin takes advantage of its construction apprentice programs and developers utilize union-based contractors, meeting these goals will be easier.”