

WisDems: ICYMI, “Foxconn fiasco disqualifies Kleefisch as a serious gubernatorial candidate”

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MADISON, Wis. — Earlier this week, the Cap Times declared in an editorial that Rebecca Kleefisch’s involvement in the Foxconn fiasco should disqualify her as a serious gubernatorial candidate. The Cap Times blisteringly wrote that “the politicians who made the Foxconn mess shouldn’t be allowed to waste taxpayer dollars on future fiascos.”

When it was signed by the Walker-Kleefisch administration, the Foxconn deal was “[the largest attempted government handout to a foreign company ever given in America.](#)” This ridiculously expensive project, which the Republican administration said would cost \$3 billion, [alarmed experts on the left and the right](#), who did not think the state would be able to [recoup its investment](#) for at least 25 years. [Kleefisch played a key role in negotiations](#), and called the deal “transformational.”

Last year, Governor Tony Evers cleaned up the mess left by Walker and Kleefisch, announcing a renegotiated deal with the company, [saving \\$2.77 billion in taxpayer dollars](#), and undoing some of the damage caused by Walker and Kleefisch’s original fiasco.

See more below on how Kleefisch’s role in the Foxconn fiasco disqualifies her as a serious gubernatorial candidate.

Cap Times: [Editorial | Foxconn fiasco disqualifies Kleefisch as a serious gubernatorial candidate](#)

The Foxconn scheme cooked up by former Gov. Scott Walker, former Lt. Gov.

Rebecca Kleefisch and former President Donald Trump looked like a fiasco from the start. Foxconn, the Taiwanese electronics company that proposed to build a \$10 billion manufacturing facility in Mount Pleasant, had a track record of promising state and local governments the moon and failing to deliver. And there was no reason to believe that Wisconsin's bumbling officials could cut a better deal than other states that had been seduced and abandoned by the conglomerate.

This editorial page warned at the time that Wisconsin was being "Foxconned."

Yet, as Wisconsin Public Radio reminds us: "Walker signed a \$3 billion tax incentive deal based on job creation. At the local and regional levels, Mount Pleasant and Racine County created a tax increment financing district in 2017 to pay for a \$764 million investment to support the Foxconn project. The public investment was later increased to \$911 million." And Kleefisch cheered him on, bragging about how the administration was "being very aggressive in our plans to assure we are putting together the very best package" for the Taiwanese corporation. The lieutenant governor gleefully promised an "exciting future ... now that Foxconn is joining Wisconsin's economy."

Trump, a notoriously inept businessman who filed for bankruptcy six times before moving on to political grifting, pumped out even more hot air than Kleefisch. He showed up in Mount Pleasant in June of 2018 to identify the Foxconn project as "the eighth wonder of the world."

"Eighteen months ago, this was a field," Trump declared. "And now it's one of the most advanced places of any kind you'll see anywhere in the world."

Unfortunately, it has remained a field — or, to be more precise, a vacant lot. With Foxconn cutting its investment to a fraction of its initial commitment to build a 20 million-square-foot manufacturing complex — which was to be funded by the largest investment ever by a foreign company on a new project in the U.S. — state and local officials have been trying desperately to turn the southeastern Wisconsin site into something more than a vacant lot.

Last week, they announced that Oterra, a Danish firm that produces food coloring for dietary supplements and dog food, would occupy a building that was expected to house part of the Foxconn project. A Racine Journal Times headline summed things up: "Building where Trump said Foxconn would be '8th wonder of the world' to be leased by food coloring company."

We're glad Oterra has stepped in to help. But they're merely relocating their North American headquarters facility from West Allis to Mount Pleasant. And they'll employ about 100 people.

With Foxconn's remaining investment in another part of the site, there's a small investment park developing in Mount Pleasant.

But there aren't 13,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs, and there never will be. The "eighth wonder of the world" has turned into a colossal boondoggle.

We won't waste a lot of ink on the "we told you so" criticism. Rather, we'll offer a suggestion for Wisconsin voters: The politicians who made the Foxconn mess shouldn't be allowed to waste taxpayer dollars on future fiascos.

That goes for Walker, who was defeated for reelection in 2018, for Trump who was beaten in 2020, and for Kleefisch, whose role in the Foxconn affair ought to disqualify her from serious consideration as a gubernatorial candidate in 2022.