



JON ERPENBACH

STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 4, 2019

Contact: Senator Jon Erpenbach
(608) 266-6670

Senator Erpenbach supports Gov. Evers' workforce development proposals

If you had any doubt that Republicans are out of touch with Wisconsinites, today's Joint Committee on Finance agency briefing on the Department of Workforce Development may clear that up. As our Republican colleagues argued for hours that Wisconsin workers don't deserve to be paid a living wage, multi-millionaires shouldn't shoulder their fair share, and hard-working Wisconsinites shouldn't be afforded basic liberties such as family and medical leave, they made it evident that they have less interest in protecting employees in Wisconsin, than in providing massive hand-outs to major corporate donors.

One of the most astonishing arguments that came up again and again by my GOP colleagues was against raising the minimum wage. According to Republicans, Wisconsin should not increase the minimum wage because that discourages workers from wanting to raise themselves out of poverty. This may be surprising, but no one chooses to be poor and living in poverty is not easy. The prehistoric argument that people can pull themselves up by their bootstraps has been disproven, and is not working. There are huge disparities in Wisconsin, and some full time employees aren't making ends meet. It was acknowledged at today's hearing that a minimum wage increase would not impact hiring for the vast majority of jobs that are higher-paying, yet my GOP colleagues strongly oppose proposals that improve employees' quality of life in Wisconsin.

Instead of agreeing with a \$1 increase in minimum wage for working-class Wisconsinites, Republicans stood up for their wasteful tax handout, which gives 16 wealthy individuals \$36 million. 79.6% of the individual portion of the manufacturing tax handout goes to millionaires, and it has produced fewer jobs since being enacted. Wisconsin added less than ½ (15,334) as many manufacturing jobs in FIVE years since the manufacturing tax credit started costing taxpayers hundreds of millions than in THREE years before it (31,431) -- and trailed the national rate of manufacturing job creation (and four out of five nearby states) since it started to take effect. The GOP arguments fall short, because they refuse to open their eyes to their failed policies.

The worker shortage did not happen overnight. It was a direct consequence of years of failed GOP policies that hurt our economy. It is tremendously disappointing that my Republican colleagues continue to be more interested in attacking the people of Wisconsin than working together to defend their rights. Secretary-designee Frostman and his team are working for the people of Wisconsin, and I am looking forward to connecting the dots to improve our economy, by looking at the realities of our worker shortages and coming up with real solutions to attract and retain talent in our state.

###