

Summary of Developments from **Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce**

Wisconsin's Business Voice

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WMC President's Report 2009

WMC continued its tradition of proactive business advocacy by kicking off the year with development of "Moving Wisconsin Forward," a visionary plan aimed at growing Wisconsin's economy. The plan was developed by WMC, with input from chambers of commerce, business leaders, educators, union leaders, government officials, the University of Wisconsin System, Wisconsin technical colleges, and private colleges and universities. Unfortunately, the current Legislature went in a different direction as our state faced the recession and employers shed over 100,000 jobs. The Legislature passed — and the Governor signed — \$3 billion in new and higher taxes and fees, along with new mandates and regulations. They even tried to increase risk for your company by expanding joint and several liability.

As 2009 drew to a close, it became evident that Wisconsin needs to renew its commitment to fundamentals to be competitive. Lowering taxes, controlling government spending, limiting regulation, and controlling liability are all keys to a healthy business climate. The WMC Board of Directors has approved the [Wisconsin Jobs 2010](#) campaign to focus our state's attention on job creation, and solutions to help business create jobs. Jobs will be our singular mission in 2010 and beyond, as we all strive to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation.

Health Care Legislation Stalling in U.S. Congress Upset U.S. Senate Race May Derail Legislation

In the wake of the recent upset U.S. Senate victory in Massachusetts by Republican Scott Brown over Democrat Martha Coakley, Democrat health care talks "teetered on the brink of collapse." Multiple sources report that U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi acknowledged she doesn't have the votes to pass the Senate health plan, and Senate Democrats are reluctant to start health talks anew with House Democrats. WMC has been at the forefront of calling upon Congress to scrap both the House and the Senate bills, and to proceed on a bipartisan basis to enact meaningful reform that actually cuts costs and improves quality.

WMC Leads Broad Business Coalition on Global Warming Legislation

Gov. "Global Warming" Bill Costs 43,000 Jobs, Increases Energy Prices

WMC is leading a coalition of business groups attempting to derail Governor Jim Doyle's so-called global warming legislation that increases energy prices, and will cost 43,000 jobs. The global warming bill would put Wisconsin out of step with other states, and WMC supports regulatory consistency for all businesses. WMC voluntarily purchases 50 percent of its energy from renewable resources.





WMC Board Approves Wisconsin Jobs 2010 Campaign

The Mission: Making Wisconsin No. 1 Business State

The WMC Board approved the Wisconsin Jobs 2010 campaign to promote top priorities for job creation that would renew Wisconsin's economy and make our state the most competitive in the nation. The [Wisconsin Jobs 2010 Agenda](#) contains common sense reforms to help Wisconsin get back to basics: control government spending, repeal \$3 billion in taxes passed in the most recent session, streamline permitting, repeal excessive regulations, and control frivolous lawsuits. The plan adopts policies that have built successful business climates in other states.

The WMC board is asking that all members make donations to support the campaign. It is critical that these efforts are well-funded in order to enact the Wisconsin Jobs 2010 Agenda, and counter groups that want to stifle economic growth with increased government spending, business mandates, and frivolous lawsuits. Can we count on you to give your support to making Wisconsin No. 1?

Wisconsin Supreme Court to Hear Case Regarding Whether \$200 Million Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund Raid Was Legal

The Wisconsin Supreme Court, January 13, said it will hear a case regarding whether a \$200 million raid on the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund was legal. To help "balance" the 2007-2009 state budget, Governor Doyle and the Legislature agreed to transfer \$200 million from the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund to help pay for other government spending. The fund was set up to pay medical malpractice awards in excess of a physician's medical malpractice liability insurance. It is funded by annual fees on doctors and other health care providers. Wisconsin physicians sued to make the state restore the transferred dollars to the fund.

Wisconsin Department of Revenue Unveils Informational Website Regarding "Dependent Child" Health Insurance Mandate Starting January 1, "Children" Under Age 27 Could be Covered Under Parent's Plan

The state budget, signed into law last summer, requires all commercial health plans, to cover an "adult child" of the insured if the child is (a) over 17 but less than 27 years old, (b) not married, (c) not eligible for the child's employer's health plan, if any, and the child's premium is not greater than under this provision. Children under age 27 could be covered, even if not a student, as currently, commonly allowed. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue has posted an informational website regarding the dependent child mandate, which provides some basic information of the tax implications of providing health insurance coverage of an adult child.

COBRA Extension Notices Available

Notices are [now available](#) for the federal government's recent extension of its subsidy of COBRA benefits to unemployed workers. Employers will have continuing compliance and notification obligations for the period covered by the extension. More information is available to download from The Schroeder Group, S.C., Attorneys at Law, www.tsqllaw.com.



Senate Passes Legislation to Create Protected Status for Fire Fighters and EMT's Absences

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Legislation was recently passed by the Wisconsin State Senate to create a protected status for volunteer fire fighters and emergency medical technicians under Wisconsin law. [Senate Bill 308](#) (SB 308) would require Wisconsin employers to permit these volunteers to be late or absent from work if responding to an emergency that begins prior to the worker reporting to work. The worker is required to notify the employer of the tardiness or absence, or if prior notice cannot be provided, a written explanation by the supervisor of the worker's volunteer unit must provide a written excuse for the failure to provide notice.



It Pays to Keep Your Employees Healthy; It's Not Too Late to Vaccinate!

This flu season has presented a unique challenge to fight a new type of influenza -- the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. The H1N1 flu is a serious disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that between mid-April and November 14, 2009, 47 million people were infected with the 2009 H1N1 flu, more than 200,000 people were hospitalized, and over 9,800 people died in the United States.

Take Action: Help Stop Wisconsin Global Warming Legislation

Wisconsin lawmakers are currently debating global warming legislation (SB 450 & AB 649) that will significantly increase the cost of energy in Wisconsin. A recent independent economic study predicted these policies will cost Wisconsin 43,000 jobs, and cost each Wisconsin citizen \$1,012 in higher energy bills. We have already lost 160,000 jobs in the last two years in Wisconsin, including 60,000 from the manufacturing sector alone. We cannot afford to worsen the situation by hitting our economy with expensive new global warming regulations that will diminish our economic competitiveness without impacting global temperatures or sea levels.

To protect our jobs and families, WMC is urging business owners to sound off. Please send a brief email asking your own legislators to oppose these expensive new regulations. It is critically important that legislators understand these sweeping new regulations will increase costs for businesses back in their own legislative districts.



WMC, Others Urge Passage Bill to Lower Prescription Drug Costs

WMC, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, and a diverse coalition of other organizations is urging Assembly passage of [Assembly Bill 482](#) (AB 482), legislation which will help lower prescription drug costs in Wisconsin. Under current law, sellers may not sell merchandise at a price below the cost of the merchandise to the seller. Unfortunately, this prevents national retailers which offer low-cost prescriptions from offering some of their discounts in Wisconsin. One national retailer, for example, has a popular program whereby many prescription drugs are available for \$4 per month, but not all of their discounts are available in

Wisconsin. AB 482 would exempt prescription drugs from this prohibition. As such, Wisconsin consumers would be able to benefit from the low-cost prescriptions currently available in other states.



Senate Passes Legislation to Create New Mental Health/AODA Health Care Mandate

On Tuesday, January 28, 2010, the Senate passed [Senate Bill 362](#) (SB 362), which will require group health plans sold in Wisconsin to cover treatment for nervous and mental disorders and alcohol and other drug abuse, commonly referred to as “mental health parity.” SB 362 passed the Senate on a vote of [20-13](#). SB 362 is now under the jurisdiction of the state Assembly.

State Assembly Passes School Leave Mandate

The Wisconsin State Assembly [recently passed Assembly Bill 116](#), legislation requiring Wisconsin employers covered by the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to provide up to sixteen hours per year of leave for employees to attend their children’s school conferences and activities. As with the existing FMLA, workers may substitute other paid leave provided by their employers for the unpaid school activity leave. Republican lawmakers sought to remove the substitution provision of the bill. The measure now goes to the Wisconsin State Senate for consideration.

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