

GOP LEADERS ANNOUNCE JOBS AGENDA FOR UPCOMING SESSION

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MADISON...The Republican leaders of the legislature today unveiled a "100 Day Jobs Agenda" that they intend to bring forward at the beginning of the next legislative session. Assembly Speaker John Gard (R-Peshtigo) and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) said it was important to plan now to capitalize on the momentum currently being generated by Wisconsin's growing economy.

"Our economy is back on its feet and on a roll. Employment is up, revenues are up, and our Wisconsin economy is outpacing most of states in the nation," said Fitzgerald. "Now is the time to capitalize on that strong recovery and work aggressively to pass legislation that will cement our competitive advantage for the long term."

"The tax cuts and regulatory reforms we passed last session are working to give our job creators an assist and our economy a boost," said Gard. "The agenda we're laying out today will build on that success and take some important next steps in our effort to make Wisconsin the best place in the nation to live, work, and locate jobs."

The 9-point agenda introduced by the lawmakers today includes initiatives in tax relief, regulatory reform, health care cost containment, and workforce training. Gard and Fitzgerald said that their jobs agenda would set the tone for the first 100 days of the new legislature.

"When I became Speaker, I said that creating jobs in Wisconsin would be Job #1 for the state Assembly," said Gard. "From Single Sales Factor to the Job Creation Act to the manufacturing power tax exemption, we delivered on that promise. Next January, we're going to pick up right where we left off and keep working to make sure existing jobs stay in Wisconsin and new jobs come here."

"A strong economy has positive ripple effects for the entire state budget," said Fitzgerald. "I think it is essential that we get out of the box quickly next session to make reforms in our tax, regulatory, and health care systems that will help build and strengthen our economy."

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100 Day Jobs Agenda

1. Freeze property taxes

High property taxes are driving families out of their homes and jobs out of Wisconsin. To remain economically competitive we will impose a property tax levy freeze for 3 years. Levies would be allowed to increase to reflect economic growth, and the freeze could be exceeded or lifted by local referendum.

2. Tax free health savings accounts

Citizens should be given the tools to manage their own family health care costs. Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) are a way for individuals to save money today for future health care needs. To encourage these savings, we will make these HSAs exempt from state taxation.

3. Eliminate the tax in health insurance premiums

By eliminating state taxation on the money individuals pay in health insurance premiums, we will make health insurance more affordable and accessible for more Wisconsin families.

4. Regulatory Reform - Job Creation Act Part 2.

Working cooperatively with Governor Doyle, the Republican legislature was able to pass the most comprehensive reforms in Wisconsin's regulatory climate in decades. Despite that success, too many jobs continue to be lost in Wisconsin because of our burdensome regulatory environment. We will build on our success of last year and pass additional measures to strengthen our economy by reforming our regulatory burden even further.

5. Research and Development Tax Credit "2020 credit"

Super R&D Tax Credit, giving a tax credit for expenditures that exceed 150 percent of the prior years expenditures. The "2020 credit" will promote more investment capital that will deliver better, higher paying jobs.

6. Expand the health care co-op program

In an effort to increase health care affordability and accessibility, the legislature worked in a bi-partisan fashion last year to create a health care insurance cooperative pilot program. These pilots allow businesses and governments to join together and form health care cooperatives that take advantage of economy of scale savings that lower health care insurance costs. This session, we will expand this program to allow more health care purchasing cooperatives statewide and thereby make it easier for more employers to provide greater health care coverage at lower cost for their workers.

7. Expand workforce training and retraining programs at tech colleges

A skilled workforce trained to meet the needs of the rapidly-changing marketplace is essential to a strong, competitive Wisconsin economy. Last session, Republicans passed legislation creating the “Wisconsin Advantage Jobs Training Program.” This program allowed technical colleges to enter into contracts with businesses for job training, retraining and skill development for Wisconsin workers. Unfortunately, Governor Doyle vetoed this important program. We will once again pass legislation allowing our technical colleges and state employers to work in cooperation to ensure a reliable stream of skilled workers in our state.

8. Rural Finance Authority

A robust agricultural economy is critical to a strong Wisconsin economy. To assist our farmers, Republicans will create a Rural Finance Authority to provide financial assistance to ag producers and agribusinessmen and women. This RFA would be modeled on a similar program currently operating across the border in Minnesota.

9. Uniform Training Standards

One important part of keeping health care affordable and accessible to businesses and workers is to ensure a reliable supply of well-trained health care professionals. To assist in workforce development in critical health care occupations, we will require the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) to develop a uniform, state-approved, curriculum and admission standard for each of its health occupation training programs. Currently, each school maintains its own curriculum and standards. This situation creates barriers to admission and transfer of students desiring training in these critically-needed health care occupations and slows these individuals’ entry as workers in the health care system.