



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER #208

Relating to a Special Session of the Legislature to Address Wisconsin's Workforce Challenges

WHEREAS, Wisconsin began this biennium in the best fiscal position in its 175-year statehood, with a record-high approximately \$7 billion surplus, the lowest unemployment rate in state history, historically high labor force participation, and the highest number of people employed ever;

WHEREAS, according to data released in June 2023 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Wisconsin's unemployment rate and labor force participation rate continued to outpace the national average;

WHEREAS, with already historically low unemployment and high workforce participation, coupled with a shrinking labor pool caused by several long-term factors, Wisconsin's small businesses, farmers and producers, hospitals and healthcare sectors, schools, and other critical employers and industries continue to face significant, generational challenges filling available jobs;

WHEREAS, the state must invest in meaningful, comprehensive, and long-term solutions to address Wisconsin's longstanding workforce challenges, reduce barriers to employment, and prevent these existing challenges from being exacerbated into an unmitigated crisis that would have calamitous consequences for Wisconsin's already-strapped workforce and future economic success;

WHEREAS, critical to addressing these longstanding challenges are efforts to ensure workers who are already participating in Wisconsin's workforce can remain in the workforce, making targeted investments to bolster key industries and sectors facing significant challenges, and efforts to ensure Wisconsin can be competitive in retaining and recruiting talented workers;

WHEREAS, unfortunately, despite such efforts having been a central focus of my 2023-25 proposed biennial budget and despite the benefit of the largest surplus in state history, the Wisconsin State Legislature rejected several initiatives designed to address our state's workforce challenges, support working families, and maintain our state's economic momentum, including expanding paid family leave, stabilizing our state's child care industry to keep child care affordable and accessible for working families and parents, targeting support for high-need sectors and industries, and making substantial investments in Wisconsin's higher education institutions to help train, educate, and retain talented workers at the University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College Systems;

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin State Legislature's failure to meaningfully and comprehensively address our state's workforce challenges with the urgency necessary will have grave, imminent, and statewide impacts on Wisconsin's workers, employers, and economy;

WHEREAS, as just one example of the consequences of legislative inaction, without investments to address the child care industry's looming fiscal cliff, The Century Foundation estimates 2,110 child care programs could close, resulting in a loss of 4,882 child care jobs, leaving 87,425 kids without child care, and resulting in approximately half a billion dollars in economic impacts between parents leaving the workforce and reduced employer productivity—a catastrophic scenario with broad, cascading effects across Wisconsin's economy;

WHEREAS, given the state's longstanding workforce challenges and already historically low unemployment and high workforce participation, Wisconsin simply cannot afford to have any workers leave our workforce, to create new or additional barriers preventing workers from joining our workforce, or to lose competitive edge in educating, training, retaining, and recruiting talented workers;

WHEREAS, through my strategic, line-item vetoes of the 2023-25 biennial budget, I have ensured there are ample state resources readily available for legislators to uphold their obligation and responsibility to address the most pressing issues facing our state and our economy and make the necessary, substantial investments to finally address our state's chronic workforce challenges;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TONY EVERS, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of the State, specifically Article IV, Section 11 and Article V, Section 4 of the Wisconsin Constitution, hereby require the convening of a special session of the Legislature at the Capitol in the City of Madison, to commence at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, solely to consider and act upon LRB-4085/LRB-4086, relating to: fall workforce package, granting rule-making authority, making an appropriation, and providing a penalty.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done in the City of Milwaukee this eighth day of August in the year of two thousand twenty-three.

TONY EVERS
Governor

By the Governor:

SARAH GODLEWSKI
Secretary of State