



Date of coverage: October 27, 2009
News

Task Force Created To Grow State Economy *Lawmakers, Business Officials To Work Collaboratively*

MADISON, Wis. -- State lawmakers and business officials are coming together with the creation of a jobs task force to help grow the state's economy.

Speaker Mike Sheridan announced the creation of the task force on Monday, and many local companies have reacted with excitement.

"This has been an evolution towards understanding the right role for government and the right role for industry," said Ralph Kauten, CEO of Quintessence Biosciences.

The Madison-based company serves as a middle-man between the discovery of a drug and its mass production, like new anti-cancer medicines.

Kauten said he believes that business leaders working with state lawmakers will lead to economic growth.

"It will mean that there will be more job opportunities," Kauten said. "There will be increased competition for skilled people, which will drive salaries up and create additional career advancement opportunities for young people."

That optimistic view is shared by the legislators organizing the task force.

"The goal is to bring in business leaders who have run successful companies, people from business organizations who know what it takes to bring ideas forward and move it into law," said state Rep. Peter Barca, D-Milwaukee.

The task force will help realize that goal, and officials said that they hope to generate ideas and get bills drafted and ready for debate for early 2010 to help pick up the rebounding economy.

"We are told it will take a long road back, and so now is the time to get together to work in a collaborative fashion to assure the projected trends come to fruition," Barca said.

Lawmakers said the task force is supported by representatives from the state's largest business groups, including Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the Wisconsin Business Council and top union leaders.

Organizers said the next step in the creation of the task force will be to hold meetings throughout the state to get as many companies involved as possible.

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