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HONADEL PROPOSES BACK TO WORK PROGRAM

Jobs Plan Would Combat Unemployment Fund Insolvency

Madison— State Representative Mark Honadel (R—South Milwaukee) is championing a new job-creation proposal. Honadel's idea, which he is calling "Wisconsin Wins," would work by giving both job seekers and employers a tryout period.

Unemployment claimants would be given the opportunity to take part-time training jobs with interested employers, with the possibility that it will lead to permanent employment. The claimants would continue to receive regular unemployment benefits while participating in the voluntary program.

"We must be open to new, creative solutions to get people back to work," Honadel said. "My plan will help match employers with potential employees for training that may lead to full-time jobs."

The program offers benefits to both employers and the unemployed. Employers could increase the probability of a good hire through the trial period, while reducing the usual risks and costs of hiring new employees. Job seekers would benefit by getting an opportunity to show potential employers the skills they possess and turn their training into full-time employment.

"I see the Wisconsin Wins program as a win-win," Honadel said. "With the insolvency crisis in the state's unemployment reserve fund, this may be one way to decrease the large number of claimants and reduce their duration. Most importantly, it could open the door to new jobs people so desperately need."

Honadel said the unique training in the program offers a new tool to displaced workers who need to change careers or acquire new specific skills.

Honadel's proposal is modeled after a successful unemployment program in the state of Georgia. "Georgia Work\$" has received bi-partisan support, as well as positive feedback from job seekers and employers. Since the program started in 2003, the Georgia Department of Labor reports that of the 23,000 participants, nearly a quarter eventually were hired by the businesses that trained them, and 60 percent found work within 90 days. As a result, Georgia was able to save millions for its unemployment insurance trust fund.

Honadel has been discussing the idea with his legislative colleagues to garner support. He also presented the plan last month at a meeting of the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council.

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