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WCCF Reaction to State of the State Address: An Appropriate Focus on Jobs and Budget Crunch

In his State of the State Address last night, Governor Doyle focused on two large and largely unavoidable topics: job creation and the state's ongoing fiscal woes. The two are deeply intertwined.

With more unpleasant revenue news expected in the near future, it is widely understood that another round of painful spending cuts is likely, and the Governor acknowledged as much in his speech. However, it is important that policy-makers also recognize that they must take a balanced approach to addressing the state's daunting budget situation. While significant cuts may be unavoidable, there are still a number of options for generating additional revenue in order to minimize the damage to the state's infrastructure and maintain crucial supports for working and unemployed families. These options include closing more tax loopholes and enhancing efforts to collect revenue that is already owed but has not been paid.

In the current economic environment, we applaud the Governor's emphasis on the importance of job creation. Beyond the business incentives he noted in his address, there are several measures state and federal policy-makers should consider to help families weather the recession and expand employment opportunities available to workers across the state. Those measures include:

- updating the state's Unemployment Insurance system so that those seeking part-time work will qualify;
- indexing the minimum wage to inflation;
- implementing a Transitional Jobs demonstration program; and
- extending the increased funding for Pell Grants that was provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Additional recommendations, as well as a wealth of data on family economics and other indicators of child well-being in Wisconsin, are available in our 2009-10 WisKids Count Data Book published last week. It is available online at http://wccf.org/pdf/wiskidscount_2009-10_fullbook.pdf.

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