



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

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For Immediate Release

December 22, 2009

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WMC Comparison of Manufacturing Jobs to Public Jobs Perpetuates False Ideas on Government Employment

A press release issued Monday by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) seems to suggest that Wisconsin's ratio of manufacturing jobs to public sector jobs is a big problem. WMC, in making the case that Wisconsin must get serious about promoting manufacturing jobs, notes that more people in the state now work for the government than work in manufacturing. WMC is absolutely right to be concerned that Wisconsin has lost a large number of manufacturing jobs in recent years. And they are absolutely right to connect the number of manufacturing jobs with the overall health of the economy. But the notion that this has anything to do with the number of public sector jobs in Wisconsin is baseless.

It is inaccurate to suggest that the problem is too many government workers. In fact, Wisconsin actually has a very lean public workforce compared to most other states. According to data released in November by the U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin ranked 41st among the states in number of full-time equivalent state and local government positions (FTEs) relative to the population in 2008. Only nine other states had a leaner public sector. Per capita spending for all state and local employees in Wisconsin was 10.6 percent below the national average, and ranked 33rd in the country.

“The myth of a bloated public sector in Wisconsin is exactly that—a myth,” said Jon Peacock director of the Wisconsin Budget Project, an initiative of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF). “Creating enough manufacturing jobs to dwarf the number of government employees would be ideal, but offering irrelevant and misleading comparisons does not help get us there.”

“We support policymakers' efforts to create and retain solid, family-supporting jobs in the manufacturing sector,” said WCCF Executive Director Ken Taylor. “Kids thrive when they grow up in economically stable homes with parents who have good jobs, whether those jobs are in manufacturing, high-tech industries, or even working for the government.”