
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

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Secretary Perez: Department of Workforce Development Looks Forward to Partnership with Legislature to Create Jobs, Grow Wisconsin's Economy

In first Legislative hearing, state Labor Secretary extends hand, pledges agency's cooperation

MADISON – At his first legislative hearing, Department of Workforce Development Secretary Manny Perez said today that Governor Walker's bold agenda for creating jobs is crucial to Wisconsin's economic future, and he welcomes the opportunity to work with the Legislature to get Wisconsin working again.

"Governor Walker's message to Wisconsin employers and those in other states looking to relocate couldn't be clearer: Wisconsin is open for business," Secretary Perez said. "Wisconsin offers a world-class workforce with a tremendous work ethic, and it ranks 5th lowest in the nation for worker's compensation costs per case, while Illinois ranks 4th highest. These are just some of the areas that differentiate Wisconsin from other states and make our state an attractive place for employers. At the DWD, we are ready to do everything we can to support policies that allow the private sector to create job opportunities for all Wisconsinites."

Secretary Perez, a labor market economist, addressed lawmakers at an informational hearing held by the Assembly Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. It was his first appearance before a legislative panel since Governor Walker appointed him as a member of his Cabinet.

Secretary Perez provided a brief overview of the department, saying DWD will be an essential instrument to attract and retain companies in Wisconsin and to facilitate sustainable employment for the state's workforce. During the hearing, Secretary Perez also took the opportunity to introduce his leadership team, Deputy Secretary Scott Baumbach, who serves as chief operating officer of the department, and Executive Assistant Georgia Maxwell, who works with the Legislature, Congress, business leaders and other stakeholders as the agency's third-highest appointed official.

Until his appointment, Secretary Perez was President and Co-owner of JNA Staffing, Inc., in Milwaukee. He previously was North American Product Manager for Manpower Managed Services, Manpower, Inc., Milwaukee.

With 1,645 employees, DWD works with employers to fill jobs, provides training and employment services to workers, helps people with disabilities gain employment and independence, enforces workers' rights, and administers Unemployment Insurance and Worker's Compensation programs.