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Workers' Contributions Keep Wisconsin a Pioneer in Workforce Delivery

A Labor Day Column by Secretary Reggie Newson Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

As we pause this Labor Day to reflect upon the contributions of Wisconsin's working men and women, we can take pride in our state's reputation as a world-class workforce.

Wisconsin produces billions of dollars in exports each year, which has cemented our status as an economic powerhouse. This is just one example of the economic success that is made possible through the work ethic of Wisconsin's more than 2.6 million workers.

The past year has brought with it significant challenges, but we have made substantial improvements under Governor Walker's leadership. In 2011, Wisconsin added tens of thousands of private-sector jobs that support working families in communities across the state. Additionally, our unemployment rate remains below the national rate and below the rates of other manufacturing-heavy Midwest states, including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

Since taking office in January 2011, Governor's Walker has made job creation his number one priority, and a highly skilled workforce goes part and parcel with this goal. In fact, developing the state's workforce continues to be one of the Governor's top budget priorities as we look ahead toward the 2013-15 biennium.

We know that job creators need to have confidence that a pipeline of highly skilled workers is in place to fill their needs. To this end, we will be gathering ideas, studying best practices and considering additional reforms that involve education, workforce training and other systems.

Through these efforts, we will create lasting change that supports additional job creation, addresses the workforce skills gap and, ultimately, creates more career opportunities for those who make up our state's workforce.

Wisconsin has led the country as a pioneer in pro-worker programs such as apprenticeship, worker's compensation, unemployment insurance and technical college education. With Governor Walker's leadership, along with the contributions of our top-notch workforce, Wisconsin is positioned to continue leading the way into the 21st century.

On this Labor Day, let's not only reflect on the strong foundation that Wisconsin workers have made in the past, but also take the opportunity to envision and explore just how much more our state can achieve in the years to come.