

## Spotlight on the State of Wisconsin - February 2011

Background and mission of the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA):

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to expanding the economy of the State of Wisconsin. Since 1975 WEDA has successfully represented the collective economic development interests of both the private and public sectors by providing leadership in defining and promoting statewide economic development initiatives. WEDA maintains Executive and Legislative Directors to administer and direct WEDA's ambitious activities and programs. A significant role for WEDA in 2010 was to commission a study that laid out strategies to make Wisconsin more competitive and enhance a pro-business culture.

Wisconsin is proud to be a Midwestern state, known for its strong dedication to quality and a long history of economic stability. Wisconsin counts among its many assets:

- A diverse and well-developed economy
- A skilled, adaptable and dependable labor force
- A highly developed infrastructure
- An educational system among the best in the country
- Strong and growing individual companies
- An exceptional quality of life
- Abundant, well-managed natural resources
- Excellent ground, rail and air transportation with deep-port water accessibly

Business Advantages:

Wisconsin's newly elected Governor has made progressive changes since taking office on January 3rd. Governor Walker was able to lead passed legislation in the first 45 days that include the following:

- Passage of Legal Tort Reform Bill (Lawsuit reform bill that changed the legal environment by requiring plaintiffs to prove that damages were actually caused by a manufacturer's product and protecting retailers from liability of defects caused by manufacturers or distributors; requires a plaintiff to prove that the defendant acted with the intent to cause injury to collect punitive damages, discourage plaintiffs from filing frivolous claims, capping non-economic damages for medical malpractice, improving rules of evidence, and protecting best practices peer review information from being subpoenaed)
- Exclusion from personal income tax the amount paid into a Health Savings Account, along with the earnings from HAS contributions and employer contributions.
- Passage of the Relocation Tax Credit which will exempt businesses from income and franchise taxes for two years for businesses that have not done business in Wisconsin for two years or more
- Passage of the expansion of the economic development tax credits from \$75 million to \$100 million.
- Passage of regulatory reform legislation which maintains that state agencies may not create rules more restrictive than the regulatory standards or thresholds provided by the legislature, that it will allow rules to be challenged in the county circuit court where the plaintiff resides, and that it would require the Governor to approve proposed rules.
- Transformation of the previous Department of Commerce to Wisconsin's Public/Private agency called the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation which will allow for the following Immediate delivery system for WEDC strategy and programs
- Direct engagement of private sector business leaders throughout the state
- Leverage private sector investment to increase public sector return on investment
- Decentralize state efforts from Madison to regional centers
- Full geographic coverage of the state, filling current gaps in economic development
- Timely feedback to effectively shape state efforts to meet local needs

**As Governor Walker starts and ends all public speeches, "Wisconsin is Open for Business".**