

Legislators Propose WEDC Changes

Written by Wisconsin Assembly, Laura Smith

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MADISON – Today Assembly Democratic Leader **Peter Barca** (D-Kenosha) and Senator **Julie Lassa** (D-Stevens Point) proposed several changes to **Gov. Walker's** troubled Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

"The proposal advanced today is inadequate to the serious problems the audit found at WEDC," Rep. Barca said. "Governor Walker still doesn't get it – WEDC needs more than spuriously developed ideas for reform, it needs a complete overhaul."

The serious legal and policy violations are not so much a problem with programs – although they also need significant changes – they are a result of failed leadership.

According to Barca, "Once again, at the 11th hour of budget deliberations, Governor Walker is lurching from one half-baked idea to another. The Governor's new WEDC proposal comes without any careful planning, without meaningful input from stakeholders, and without any input from WEDC board members. The Governor's proposal does not address central problems at WEDC including their failure to track job numbers and failure to follow state laws and the agency's own rules."



"We just met as a board about two weeks ago and Governor Walker as chairman of the board did not present any of these ideas," Sen. Lassa said. "What is the point of having a private-sector board if you are not going to consult with them? It is clear the governor does not have a plan and instead is focused on running for president."

WEDC has been plagued with problems from the start due to exactly this same lack of planning – without so much as a business or transition plan. The WEDC legislative board members have once again not been kept abreast of the agency's ongoing problems and were not consulted in addressing the serious issues identified by the recent audit or in the Governor's plan released

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today.

Yesterday, Rep. Barca and Sen. Lassa called on Governor Walker, as Chairman of the WEDC board, and Dan Ariens, Vice Chairman, to hold an emergency WEDC board meeting in the next two weeks in response to the recent audit. They also asked Rep. Kerkman and Sen. Cowles (co-chairs of Joint Legislative Audit Committee) to schedule a hearing as soon as possible in response to the audit.

“Today’s announcement reinforces how vital it is that the WEDC board meet immediately to discuss the path forward,” Rep. Barca added. “Wisconsin is 40th in the nation on job creation and 42nd on wage growth and there isn’t a minute to waste.”