

Looking at the FOXCONN Deal with a Wisconsin Perspective

Written by Jon Erpenbach. State Senator 27th District

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There is real desperation here, because our job growth has trailed the National average 22 straight quarters, but that doesn't mean we need to give away the farm. We can do better.

MADISON - Every single elected official is interested and willing to help businesses build and create family supporting jobs here in Wisconsin. That's because our job growth has trailed the National average 22 straight quarters, every single quarter since Governor Walker created the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). There is real desperation, because there is real need. But that doesn't mean we need to give away the farm (literally) for the big fish that falls into our lap. We can work hard and build the businesses we have with investments in education and training, infrastructure, and our assets as a state like the environment.



We all love Wisconsin because it is such a beautiful area to live, raise a family, and retire. Every corner of our state has pristine natural areas we all use for recreation, hunting and other leisure activities. Sacrificing those natural areas as a part of the FOXCONN deal is foolish. Directly putting our water, air and environment at risk is bad public policy. The "give away our

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environment” attitude with this deal also opens the door to exempt future economic development deals from environmental approval rules and is simply unacceptable. We have dozens of examples of Wisconsin businesses that have grown and flourished without dumping waste and diverting streams and sacrificing Great Lakes waters.

Next we need to examine the deal. Is it really the best we could get for our taxpayer investment or does it reflect the political desperation some leaders feel because of their own failures? Any taxpayer funded investment should demonstrate the best return on investment we can get, build family supporting jobs to replace the union living wage manufacturing jobs we have lost, and have real recovery claw backs if the business packs up and moves or if they automate and eliminate jobs in the process. Governor Walker and WEDC do not have an awesome track record with recovery when companies outsource jobs and the potential replacement of supported jobs with automation is a brave new world for all of us.

The deal does have benchmarks before funds are released which is good, but lacks claw backs if jobs are outsourced or automated – the new Assembly version is just the same. Claw backs require businesses to pay back taxpayer costs if the business fails to keep the contract. Wisconsin needs to be able to at least try to take on FOXCONN if they damage our environment and our economy. FOXCONN is not a Wisconsin company building their future here. They are a Taiwanese company looking to avoid President Trump’s tariff threats and we are just the state with the best deal for them.

We cannot let the relentless pursuit of jobs take away what makes Wisconsin our home. We can do better.

If you would like more information on FOXCONN and special session Senate Bill 1 contact my office at [608-266-6670](tel:608-266-6670) or sen.erpenbach@legis.wi.gov