

Governor Walker's Year of A Better Bottom Line



2014

INITIATIVE

STATE OF WISCONSIN



Department of Workforce Development

A Note from DWD Secretary Reggie Newson

The American Dream of working hard, earning a living, and being independent should be attainable by everyone, including people with disabilities. During Governor Walker's 2014 State of the State address, he declared 2014 as the Year of A Better Bottom Line, promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Over the past year, Governor Walker's Administration has highlighted the skills, talents, and abilities that people with disabilities have to offer Wisconsin employers. Governor Walker's Administration has also recognized hundreds of businesses that experience the value that people with disabilities bring to the workforce.

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) have been key partners in carrying out the Year of A Better Bottom Line initiative under Governor Walker's leadership.

Together, Wisconsin is growing the workforce that encourages the talents of everyone who wants to work. It is a Wisconsin that supports a better bottom line for all.



Reggie Newson
Secretary

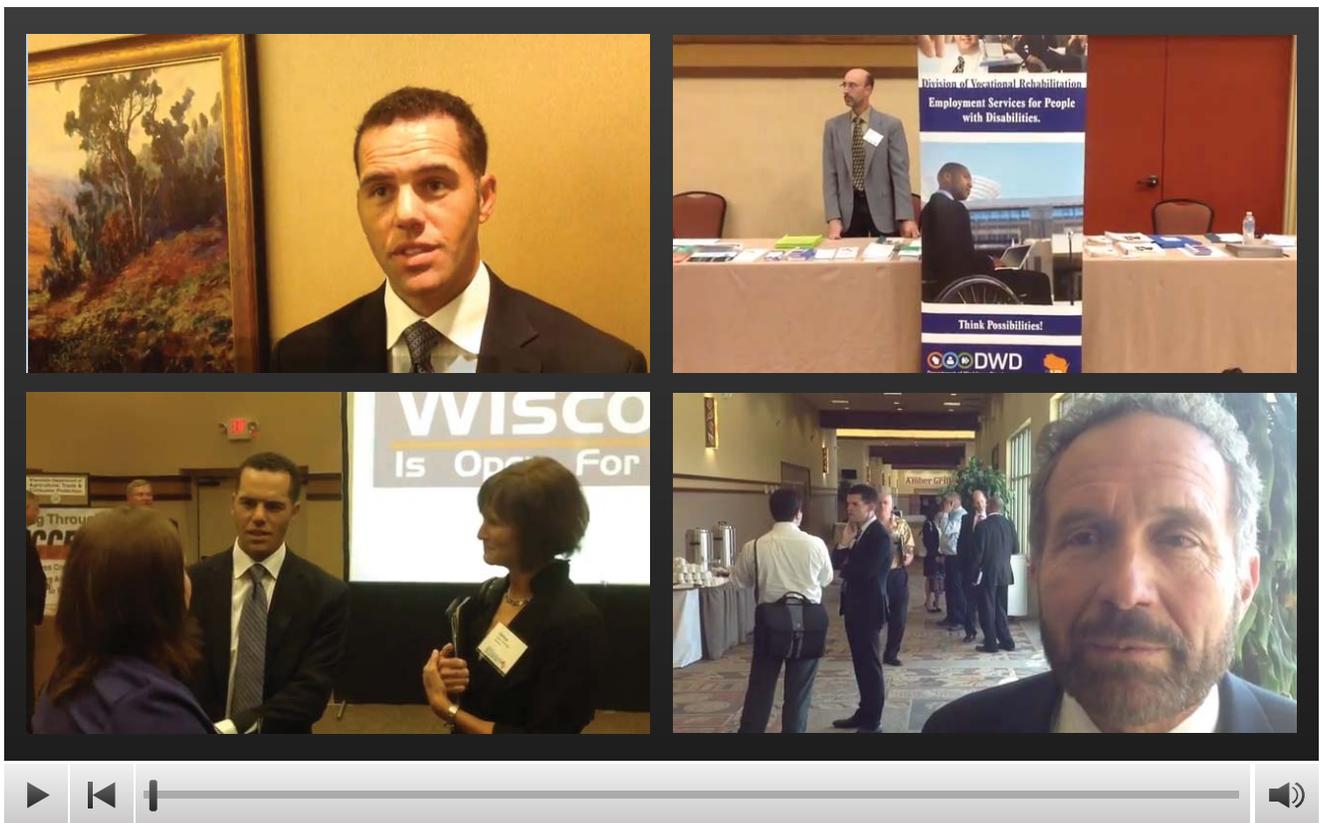


Governor Scott Walker embraced a message that he heard at a National Governor's Association (NGA) meeting in August 2013 - a message about connecting businesses with qualified job seekers with disabilities. This message was part of A Better Bottom Line, an initiative led by Delaware Governor Jack Markell, who used it as his agenda during his recent term as the chair of the NGA.

In October 2013, Governor Walker hosted a Small Business Summit, where the focus was helping small business tap into the many skills and abilities that job seekers with disabilities have to offer. Steve Pemberton, Walgreens Chief Diversity Officer and a vocal advocate for including people with disabilities in the Walgreens workforce, was a speaker at the conference.



Governor's Small Business Summit Highlighting Employing People with Disabilities Video



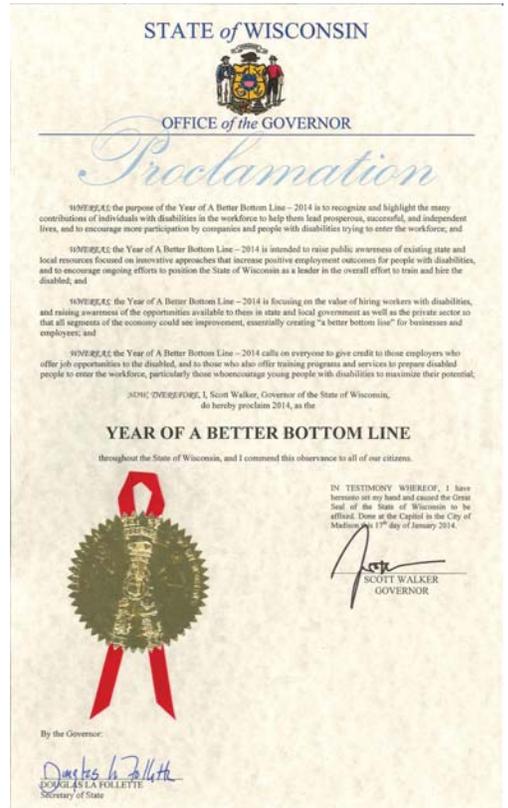
In December 2013, Governor Walker signed Act 58, reinforcing Wisconsin DVR as a high performing program and one that is worth investing in. This legislation, which had bipartisan support in both houses of the Wisconsin legislature, provided DWD with additional funding to capture the full federal match of available dollars and reduce the DVR waiting list – meaning that DVR will be able to serve an additional 3,000 job seekers with disabilities over the current biennium. The legislation also added nine full-time DVR staff to deliver vocational guidance and counseling that is critical to ensure job seekers with disabilities reach their employment goals. With the additional funding and staff, DVR expects to eliminate the waiting list for services for people with significant disabilities by the end of calendar year 2014.

During his January 2014 State of the State Address, Governor Walker brought statewide attention to the importance of including people with disabilities in Wisconsin's workforce when he declared 2014 as the Year of A Better Bottom Line in Wisconsin. In his speech, Governor Walker said:

“Make no mistake, A Better Bottom Line is not about charity. A Better Bottom Line means helping both the individual and the company do well. We are looking for ways to help employers hire people who will add value to their organizations.

All throughout 2014, I will highlight employers, who find the unique abilities and hire people with disabilities, as well as organizations, which help people with disabilities grow their skills and find meaningful work.”

With his speech, Governor Walker set the tone for an initiative that focuses on the skills, talents and abilities that people with disabilities have to offer to the Wisconsin businesses that hire them. From Superior to Racine and from Eau Claire to Marinette, Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, Cabinet Secretaries, and workforce partners have visited Wisconsin employers that have recognized the value that people with disabilities bring to the workforce.



DWD highlighted Wisconsin businesses that are employing people with disabilities. Examples of such employers include:

- Mosinee Cold Storage – Mosinee
 - Several DVR On the Job Trainings (OJT) evolved to full-time, permanent employment for job seekers with disabilities.
- Super One Foods – Superior
 - Josh, a featured employee, was first hired by the store as a Temporary Work experience. That evolved into an OJT and eventually, he was hired into a permanent position at the store.
- Great Harvest Bread Company – La Crosse
 - Store needed help quickly to be ready for opening day.
 - Connected DVR job seeker in an OJT which turned into a permanent hire.
 - Several months after the OJT ended, the owner considers the DVR hire her best employee.
- Linetec – Wausau
 - With some inexpensive technology, a job seeker with a significant hearing loss is able fully participate in the workplace.
- Klondike Cheese – Monroe
 - Ben, a featured employee, was first hired by the store as a Temporary Work experience. That evolved into an OJT and eventually, he was hired into a permanent position with the company.
- Cintas – New Berlin
 - Several DVR OJTs evolved to full-time, permanent employment for job seekers with disabilities.



Governor Walker's Year of A Better Bottom Line also drew attention to several initiatives designed to increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. Among them:

Blueprint for Prosperity

In March 2014, Governor Walker signed legislation under his *Blueprint for Prosperity* initiative to invest an additional \$35.4 million into the Wisconsin Fast Forward program, a demand-driven and employer-focused worker training grant program. The additional funding included investments focused on job seeker with disabilities:



- \$850,000 to expand Project SEARCH, a program that helps young people with disabilities transition from high school to the workplace. The expansion will increase the number of participating businesses by 21, up from the current 7, over the next three years. Both Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Kleefisch have attended Project SEARCH graduations and open houses across the state.
- More than \$600,000 in worker training grant awards to help more than 200 persons with disabilities develop demand-driven skills to reach their employment goals. Governor Walker announced these grants in November 2014.



Wisconsin PROMISE

In April 2014, top leaders from the Departments of Workforce Development, Health Services, Children and Families, and Public Instruction encouraged youths with special needs and their families to sign up for enrollment in the Wisconsin PROMISE initiative. Wisconsin PROMISE is a five-year, \$32.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education that provides services to youth and their families who receive Social Security disability benefits (SSI), with the goal of improving participants' education and career outcomes.

A total of 2,000 youth (between the ages of 14-16) receiving SSI and their families are being enrolled for possible participation in PROMISE grant-supported activities. Wisconsin PROMISE Intake Coordinators (PICs) located around the state are available to assist them with the enrollment process. To meet the federal requirements for the grant, half of the enrollees go into the PROMISE Grant program, and the other 1,000 are enrolled for traditional DVR programs.

A Wisconsin that develops the talent of everyone who wants to work is a Wisconsin that will grow and prosper. As Governor Walker's Year of a Better Bottom Line has illustrated, including people with disabilities in Wisconsin's workforce benefits us all. Businesses hire qualified and dedicated employees who are loyal and enthusiastic about their work. People with disabilities experience the pride and independence that comes with earning a paycheck. It is a Wisconsin that is better for everyone's bottom line.



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