

WMC COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Agenda

Economic Continuity

Ensure Critical Business Operations May Continue

Our economy must be allowed to function during times of emergency, especially businesses and workers in the areas of health care delivery, and the manufacturing and distribution of food, medicine, medical equipment, energy, and other critical products that supply those industries and their distribution chains. Our statutes must, at a minimum, specifically ensure that any state or federal emergency order maintain the availability of employers and workers to remain operational in the areas referenced in the Department of Homeland Security “Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce.” WMC believes all manufacturing, its suppliers and distribution must be deemed essential.

Business Liquidity

The economic downturn has resulted in many businesses, both large and small, in a difficult cash flow situation that makes it hard or even impossible to meet payroll and pay vendors. The following measures would provide immediate relief to employers, making it easier to keep employees on the payroll.

Allow Businesses to Temporarily Defer Paying 2020 State Taxes

Allow businesses to defer making payments on income and franchise taxes, the economic development surcharge, the sales tax imposed on retailers, and other relevant state taxes in 2020. This action would increase liquidity for businesses and delay compliance costs associated with filing tax returns.

Defer Sales Tax Payments and Pause Audits

The Legislature should statutorily defer sales tax payments from businesses to the Department of Revenue (DOR) until the emergency order is lifted, including deferral of interest on payments not made during this time. Also, require the DOR to pause all sales tax audits, which are incredibly disruptive to business operations, until after the emergency is lifted.

Property Tax Payment Extension

Provide businesses with a 90-day extension on their next property tax payment installment.

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WMC COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Agenda

Business Liquidity (cont'd)

Agricultural Building Tax Credit

The agricultural sector is responsible for keeping grocery store shelves stocked in these uncertain times. However, the last few years have been a challenging time for many members of Wisconsin agriculture due to low commodity prices and trade uncertainty. Enacting AB 873/SB 818 would provide up to \$7,500 per producer – in the form of an income tax credit that would offset property taxes paid on buildings used for agricultural production – which would allow farmers to reinvest in their business, pay their employees, and make ends meet. The bill passed unanimously in the state assembly and has bipartisan support in the state senate. The state senate should pass and the governor should sign this legislation into law.

Make Research & Development Tax Credit Refundable

COVID-19 has shown that the United States is overly reliant on foreign manufacturing for a wide variety of medical supply chains. To ensure that research, development, and production of innovative new products happen in the United States – and Wisconsin in particular – Wisconsin's Research Tax Credit should be made fully-refundable.

Self-Insured Medical Expense Assistance

Provide financial relief to employers providing self-insured medical benefits for employees to defray the cost of medical expenses from treatment of employees with COVID-19 illness.

Unemployment Account Experience Rating

Prohibit unemployment benefit withdrawals made during the COVID-19 emergency declaration from counting against an employer's experience rating for unemployment tax calculations.

Employee Assistance

Temporarily Waive the One-Week Waiting Period for Unemployment Benefits

Provide immediate financial assistance to families by temporarily waiving the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits. The waiver would expire on December 31, 2020, or upon the lifting of the emergency declaration, whichever occurs earlier.

COVID-19 Family Recovery Tax Credit

Create a refundable tax credit for businesses who choose to continue paying employees who must self-isolate or care for family members who self-isolate as a result of COVID-19 illness, or who opt to pay employees even after shutting down.

Property Tax Payment Extension

Provide homeowners with a 90-day extension on their next property tax payment installment.

Medical Expense Assistance

Create a state fund to help employees defray the cost of out-of-pocket medical expenses associated with high deductible medical insurance treatment for COVID-19 illness.

Enhance Work Share Opportunities

Ease the Work Share requirements under 108.062 so it applies to a workforce of any size, including small employers, and simplify the process for approval. This will allow a company to reduce hours – rather than lay people off – while utilizing unemployment benefits to supplement worker income.



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Regulatory & Liability Relief

Temporarily Waive All Continuing Education Requirements for Regulated Professions

Continuing education requirements for professions licensed or otherwise regulated by the state may be important in normal times, but should be temporarily waived. These educational requirements are often costly for employees, require in-person contact, and require time away from work. The State should not be forcing employees to incur additional costs and potentially expose themselves to infected individuals in a time of public health crisis.

Study Making Regulations Waived During the Emergency Permanent

The state's power to regulate is one of the most intrusive powers of government. Regulation often comes at the cost of limiting economic prosperity and liberty of Wisconsinites. If regulations are being waived to increase public health, safety, and welfare during a public health crisis, then these regulations may have not been necessary in the first place, and the Legislature should review and repeal unnecessary regulations.

Protect Employers from Liability for Keeping Their Workers & Workplaces Safe

The legislature should enact liability protections, including a temporary exception to the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act, which allow businesses to screen their employees and other visitors (e.g. temperature scan) for illness prior to entrance of the employer's facility. Further, provide liability protections for employers who require employees to engage in proper hygiene procedures.

Limit Liability for Medical Mask Manufacturers

Enact liability protections for manufacturers of all types of respirator masks and face shields certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Welfare.

Transportation and Logistics

Increase Highway Weight Limits

Increasing highway weight limits will allow badly-needed supplies to move more efficiently through our economy, and will reduce shipment costs at a time when businesses need relief. All commercial trucks in Wisconsin should have temporarily increased weight limits to 90,000 lb, as Iowa and Minnesota have done, and we should harmonize our temporary overweight requirements with those states to ease regulatory and logistics burdens. Long term, Wisconsin should enact SB 404/ AB 432, which would increase highway weight limits for all commercial trucks to 91,000 lb while doing less damage to Wisconsin highways.

Temporarily Reallocate Roadway Use

As consumer patterns change due to the ongoing health crisis to an even greater focus on delivery, facilitating faster and more-reliable deliveries is imperative. Local governments should be encouraged to temporarily reallocate a portion of street parking to temporary loading and unloading zones to make it easier for e-commerce deliveries, local restaurant food deliveries, and to make it easier for local businesses without loading docks to restock their shelves.



WMC COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Agenda

Health Care Priorities

Flexible Licensing for Health Care Workers

Grant retired health care professionals like nurses and doctors a temporary license to practice in the state in response to COVID-19. Allow health care workers licensed in other states to practice in Wisconsin in response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Testing

As the capacity to test increases, employees working in essential industries like health care, manufacturing and energy should be a priority for testing to ensure COVID-19 doesn't spread throughout a vital workforce.

Bring Medical Supplies to Wisconsin

Wisconsin should do all it can to encourage the federal government to release reagents and other supplies to Wisconsin hospitals and other facilities.

Remove Regulatory Obstacles to Ramping up Production of Personal Protective Equipment

Health care workers are in desperate need of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and the need only grows each day. As manufacturers look to ramp up production, or switch production to producing PPE, state and federal government regulations and approvals should be relaxed.

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