



Legislative Update January 27, 2012

The WTCS is monitoring three legislative proposals of particular interest.

AB 398 Workforce Growth Grants.

Introduced by Rep. Barca (D-Kenosha), this bill would provide \$10 million annually for technical colleges to address pipeline capacity barriers to closing the skills gap. The aid would be distributed to districts on a competitive grant basis by the WTCS for projects in which:

- the college partners with a business, consortium of businesses, an economic development organization or a local workforce development board;
- to meet local needs supporting sectors with a “documented skills gap” or high workforce shortage, including manufacturing, energy, informational technology, skilled trades and healthcare;
- for activities that address development of individuals prior to entering the workforce or for workforce training; for any of the following:
 - “Jobs training scholarships” for students;
 - building or infrastructure construction;
 - equipment and material purchases;
 - faculty hiring;
 - development of certain curricula; and
 - student career support services including job placement and business recruitment.

The Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee held a hearing on this proposal on January 12, 2012, and it remains in committee awaiting a vote. Testimony in support of the bill was offered by a panel comprised of Minority Leader Barca, Gateway President (and president of the WTCS Presidents Association) Bryan Albrecht, WTCS Vice President Morna Foy, and Paul Gabriel. Bill history and text: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/proposals/ab398>

AB 473 (also SB 375) – Extending the Time Before Prohibiting Sale of “WiscNet” Telecommunication Services by the UW System

Introduced in January, 2012 by Sen. Moulton and Rep. Wynn, these bills simply extend the WiscNet termination date by one year to July 1, 2014. This allows additional time to consider and implement the recommendations of a Legislative Audit Bureau study of WiscNet due January 1, 2013 and to allow current WiscNet members to develop an alternative mechanism for accessing broadband and Internet services.

Technical colleges, the UW, K-12 school districts, public libraries and many other entities use an Internet “backbone” and other telecommunication services arrayed under “WiscNet” services

operated and managed by the UW System. WiscNet has effectively provided major “bandwidth” needed for cutting edge instructional technology, communications technology, and the sharing of data not otherwise available in the private marketplace or that is prohibitively expensive in that marketplace. A provision of Act 32, the 2011-13 State Budget, effectively terminates the involvement of the UWS institutions in WiscNet as of July 1, 2013. The provision states that the UW (itself or as a member, shareholder, or partner of an entity) may no longer offer, sell, resell, or provide telecommunications services to a public or private entity, except for certain pre-existing services offered only within the UW System itself.

The Senate Higher Education Committee held a hearing on SB 375 last week and voted 6-1 to pass the bill out of committee on Monday. The only no vote was Sen. Kedzie. Representatives from the UWS, UW-Colleges, K-12, Libraries and the WTCS provided testimony in support. Bill history and text:

SS2 AB 18: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/proposals/se1/ab18>

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UPDATED – SB 275 (also AB 353) - Changing the Composition of Technical College District Boards

These bills would change the composition of technical college district boards and eligibility to serve. The proposed bill would require each 9-member district board be comprised of:

- Six “business persons,”
- One elected state or local official,
- One school district administrator, and
- One additional member.

“Business person” is limited to an employee, owner, director or manager or retiree of a:

- for-profit business;
- non-profit hospital, clinic or healthcare organization or facility; or,
- state or federal credit union.

This definition of business person is broader than the original Senate bill draft, which covered only for-profit businesses (and not healthcare or credit unions). However, the current requirement of two employer members would no longer apply. All six “business members” could be retirees or employees. Under this bill, other aspects of the appointment process including plans of representation would remain unchanged.

The types of employees and retirees no longer able to serve include those representing large and important district employers with employees trained by technical colleges. They also represent community partners, service groups and professions like police, fire, public safety, nursing, health occupations, education, childcare, and utility workers. The bill would also serve to make arbitrary distinctions among employees with similar jobs but different employers. For example, an insurance professional would or would not qualify depending on the type of company. Wisconsin is home to many fraternal and non-profit insurance concerns. Employees of these organizations would not qualify while employees of a for-profit insurance company would.

These bills were introduced by lead sponsors Representative Mark Honadel (R-South Milwaukee) and Senator Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend). SB 275 received a hearing on December 8, 2011. AB 353 received a public hearing on January 5, 2012. Both bills remain in committee awaiting a vote that would make that bill ready for consideration by its respective house. DBA Executive Director Paul Gabriel and WTCS Vice President Morna Foy testified in opposition at both hearings. Also testifying in opposition at the Assembly hearing was a group comprised of:

- **Lauri Steeber**, Janesville, Chairperson of the Blackhawk Board and a retired lieutenant, Wisconsin State Patrol;
- **Dr. Tom Eckert**, Blackhawk Technical College president;
- **Ed Lukasek**, Sparta, the elected official member of the Western Board, a City of Sparta alderman, military veteran, and a sales and marketing executive in private business;
- **John Lukas**, Manitowoc, Chairperson of the Lakeshore Board, past-president of the District Boards Association, and vice president of LDI Industries, family-owned manufacturing companies with more than 200 employees.

At this time, no amended bills have been circulated and no vote is scheduled in either committee. Bill history and text:

AB 353: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/proposals/ab353>

SB 275: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/proposals/sb275>

State of the Union

As part of his State of the Union address on Tuesday, the President unveiled his Blueprint for “An America Built to Last.” Additional details about the key points raised in the Blueprint continue to emerge and will likely be more directly addressed when the President releases his 2013 budget proposal, which is now estimated for release on February 13. Issues mentioned in the State of the Union Address, the Blueprint and additional comments made since the State of the Union include:

- improving the skills of American workers to help meet the needs of employers through the President’s request for a national commitment from community colleges and businesses to work as partners in training 2 million skilled workers.
- reforming job training and unemployment insurance to create one website that dislocated workers can use to help them get back to work.
- calling on every state to require that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18.
- doubling work-study jobs over five years.
- shifting \$10 billion a year in federal aid toward colleges that hold net tuition costs down by taking aid away from colleges that do not hold down costs.
- creating a \$1 billion competition encouraging states to contain public tuition rates.
- establishing a \$55 million competition to foster new strategies for colleges to increase educational productivity and student outcomes.
- creating a “college scoreboard” to provide easy-to-read information for students and families on individual college costs, graduation rates and other measures.
- preventing student loan rates from doubling as scheduled July 1, 2012.

The WTCS will be monitoring for any additional information or federal activity related to these proposals, including how any changes might affect the availability of existing funding for colleges or students. More information about the State of the Union (including the 8-page Blueprint for “An America Built to Last”) is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2012>.

State of the State

In Wednesday’s [State of the State address](#), Governor Walker spoke at length about job creation and the importance of skills training, saying “we heard many business owners say that they have jobs but that they cannot find enough skilled workers to fill them. This is a problem that must be solved.”

While he did not announce specific program funding initiatives, the Governor did reference his [Wisconsin Working](#) jobs plan. This came out of his *Special Cabinet on Economic and Workforce Investment*. Under the jobs plan:

- DWD will add staff to connect people to employment, double the number of job fairs, and conduct more outreach.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) will expand its efforts to match returning veterans with job opportunities.
- The Governor created the **College and Workforce Readiness Council**, which includes President Clancy and is tasked with:
 - reducing dropout and remediation rates;
 - increasing the number of degrees and certificates;
 - designing shorter, less costly degree programs;
 - encouraging students to pursue trades and high-demand professions;
 - easing credit transfer; and
 - expanding dual enrollment opportunities.

Thank you to Paul Gabriel and the District Boards Association for state legislation information included in this message. If you have any questions about the information in this communication, please contact Morna Foy (morna.foy@wtcsystem.edu), Nancy Merrill (nancy.merrill@wtcsystem.edu) or Conor Smyth (conor.smyth@wtcsystem.edu) in the System Office of Policy and Government Relations.