

July 1, 2008

Roberta Gassman, Secretary  
Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development  
Madison

Dear Secretary Gassman,

You recently announced a Doyle Administration plan to redeploy Job Service staff from 78 statewide Job Center locations to 12 urban centers. You said the plan would "transform our employment and training services to best meet the needs of Wisconsin's workers and employers in the 21st century."

More realistic, rural Wisconsin job seekers, employers and concerned legislators can see the plan will significantly reduce their access to quality, timely services. Moving all Job Service personnel to 12 urban locations fails the needs of rural areas. Median household incomes are significantly lower in rural regions than urban. The result is that our current economic circumstances, including plant closures and layoffs, cause greater burdens on rural communities and workers than for urban areas. Last month's flooding disaster exacerbates their plight.

A responsive state government would collaborate on ways to rush more services to help rural workers and employers in response to current conditions. Your plan instead abandons rural communities, workers and employers by consolidating services into a handful of urban sites.

Your plan lowers Job Service costs at the disregard of Job Center partner organizations and local taxpayers. Your plan increases their expenses when they are already strapped by years of funding cuts. Your plan forces those partners to pick up infrastructure costs vacated by Job Service with no advanced notice and at a time they can least afford increased expenses. Your plan shifts costs and only adds to the already high tax burden felt by rural communities. Partner organizations will be forced into a decision to increase local taxes or cut vital services.

Your plan disregards most of the hard-working Job Service staff, forcing them to move, commute long distances, or quit. Your plan would then have staff travel

back to the communities they were forced to leave to provide services on an itinerant basis. Itinerant services will require costly travel reimbursement, higher fuel consumption and considerable non-productive "windshield" time.

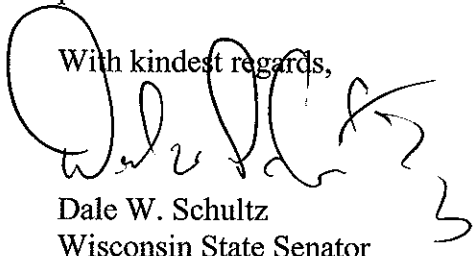
Your plan requires rural workers to have considerable computer ability to access online job center services when in reality, many rural job seekers lack fundamental computer skills requisite for job search and work related skill development. Many rural residents do not have reasonable access to broadband service required for the technology systems proposed in your plan.

Wisconsin residents that actually need Job Center services often lack basic academic and workforce skills. According to your own DWD figures, forty percent of Wisconsin workers, age 26 and older, hold only a high school diploma or are high school dropouts. These workers require more face-to-face assistance. They need a case manager and support services to prepare for and compete in today's global economy. Simply put your plan to force the closure of all rural community Job Centers leaves rural workers facing a future with more low-skill, low-wage jobs and threatens the economic viability of rural communities.

It appears your consolidation plan was developed in relative isolation without sufficient real world input from those it most impacts, including Job Center partners, rural community leaders, workers, employers and the families it would harm.

I urge you to reconsider this ill-developed plan and start anew with an inclusive process.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale W. Schultz", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dale W. Schultz  
Wisconsin State Senator