



CHAMBER ALLIANCE
Chippewa Falls • Eau Claire • Menomonie

24th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally

Madison – January 31, 2018

Best Western Premier Park Hotel & Wisconsin State Capitol

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Social media

Twitter: @ChippewaRally

Hashtag: #ChippewaRally

Facebook event: www.facebook.com/events/876276742543389/

Sponsoring Chamber Facebook pages:

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Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley – vibrant regional economic hub

Chippewa Falls • Eau Claire • Menomonie

The Chippewa Valley is West Central Wisconsin's regional economic hub. The vitality of our communities is driven by a desirable quality of life, low cost of living, top quality educational institutions, and strong businesses and non-profit organizations. We are becoming increasingly known for our ability to create collaborative relationships that improve the lives of our citizens and foster a positive economic environment.

The Chippewa Valley boasts a diverse economy that must compete everyday with our Minnesota neighbors to the west... a regional center for medicine, manufacturing, retail, technology, financial services, education, customer service and, increasingly, the arts and culture.

24th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally

Strengthening partnerships

The Chippewa Valley Rally is organized by the Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance – Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie – representing over 2,200 members with more than 55,000 employees. We come to Madison to recognize and strengthen our region's mutually-beneficial relationship with state government – including transportation, workforce development, education, economic development and more.

2018 Issues

- Provide vigorous state leadership to address workforce challenges
- Maintain strong public education institutions as vital economic assets
- Address long-term transportation needs
- Accelerate rural broadband expansion

Schedule

6:00 a.m. Board bus

10:00 a.m. Issues briefing and Q&A

CVTC Applied Technology Center
Park Hotel – 8th floor

11:30 a.m. Legislative appointments

12:00 noon Legislative appointments

12:30 p.m. Luncheon

Remarks by Governor Scott Walker

1:45 p.m. Legislative appointments

2:15 p.m. Legislative appointments

2:45 p.m. Legislative appointments

4:00 p.m. Reception

6:00 p.m. Events conclude

6:15 p.m. Bus departs Park Hotel

9:15 p.m. Arrive Eau Claire

State Capitol

State Capitol

Park Hotel – 8th floor

State Capitol

State Capitol

State Capitol

Park Hotel – 8th floor

CVTC Applied Technology Center

◆ Provide vigorous state leadership to address workforce challenges

Workforce has emerged as the #1 challenge of the business community in the Chippewa Valley. Increasing difficulties in filling positions at all levels and in multiple industries threaten to dampen opportunities for economic growth. Continuing demographic challenges, including looming baby boomer retirements, highlight the need to pull out all the stops to deal effectively with this problem.

It's critical that the state take a strong leadership role to attract and retain talent, ensure relevant educational and training opportunities are available to meet critical talent needs, and maximize the available workforce by removing barriers to employment.

✓ *Thank you for progress made*

Workforce development

Thanks to funding from the legislature, the efforts of the Department of Workforce Development, the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, and the responsiveness of our area universities and technical colleges, progress has been made towards equipping individuals to fill needed positions in high demand occupations.

- Wisconsin Fast Forward, Blueprint for Prosperity and Workforce Advancement Training (WAT) grants providing critical employer-focused skills training in cooperation with local employers, educational institutions and resource providers, including health care, manufacturing, technology, customer service, and others.
- Efforts of the Department of Workforce Development, including the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation partnering with local organizations, to help workers overcome barriers to employment with programs like Project Search and others.
- Recent legislative changes addressing the benefits cliff related to child care assistance for lower income workers.
- Implementation of the Momentum West Regional Talent Initiative, thanks to a WEDC grant, leveraged with other grant and private sector funds.

Economic development and quality of life

Prudent public investments are driving significant economic vitality in the Chippewa Valley, prime examples of collaboration among government, education and the private sector to enhance the quality of life and strengthen economic competitiveness.

- Communities including Altoona, Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie have benefitted from WisDOT projects, targeted economic assistance from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, Main Street programs, the West Central Wisconsin Regional Business Fund, and participation from our public institutions of higher learning, UW-Eau Claire, UW-Stout and Chippewa Valley Technical College.
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation support for the \$64 million Mills Fleet Farm project in Chippewa Falls.
- Broadband Expansion Grants in Chippewa and Dunn counties.

- The Confluence Project in Eau Claire, where the state contribution of \$15 million to meet facility needs for UW Eau Claire was leveraged with local government, philanthropic and private investment to create an \$85 million project. Now nearing completion, it is the linchpin in a community revitalization that has led to well over \$100 million in additional private development. More importantly, the project will enhance the competitiveness of western Wisconsin as a regional cultural destination, a quality of life asset that will aid area employers in talent recruitment and retention.

→ **Action requested**

- Increase investment in talent attraction and retention efforts, including keeping Wisconsin graduates in the state, encouraging former residents to return, and marketing the positive attributes of the state and its regions to attract new talent.
 - Support legislation to provide an additional \$6.8 million for the marketing campaign by WEDC, DWD and Travel Wisconsin to attract talent to the state – reaching neighboring states and veterans – while ensuring all regions of the state are highlighted.
 - Consider attraction, relocation and retention incentives targeted at individuals.
- Continue the effective collaboration with Chippewa Valley communities to implement investments that enhance the quality of life and make them attractive for recruiting and retaining talent.
- Maximize efforts to remove barriers to employment and equip individuals with employability skills, including people with disabilities, former inmates, or others who have various challenges to being effective employees.
- Continue and expand targeted training opportunities like Wisconsin Fast Forward and Blueprint for Prosperity grants, apprenticeships, and others.
- Guide and support efforts in public and private education to meet the needs of our 21st century workforce.
- Look at issues related to the availability of housing, transportation and other infrastructure, and develop strategies to address them.
- Ensure cooperation and accountability across state agencies, educational institutions, regional organizations and the private sector so all initiatives reach their full potential. Support regional efforts to meet workforce challenges in ways that address the specific issues related to regional variations in demographics and industries.

◆ **Maintain strong public education institutions as vital economic assets**

In an era of scarce and competing public resources, our public education institutions must be given full support to ensure they fulfill their mission to prepare the educated workforce needed in the Chippewa Valley. At the same time, they must be given the tools and accountability to change and adjust as needed to maintain their effectiveness and respond to today's needs.

K-12 schools

Local schools fulfill a crucial role in providing a high quality of life in Wisconsin and preparing our young people to live productive adult lives. Providing high quality public schools is one of the top priorities in every community.

With changing demographics and workforce needs, schools have faced increased challenges, demands and expectations. At the same time, school districts must work within revenue limits that were established many years ago, with per pupil levels often varying widely between similar districts. Districts throughout the state have increasingly turned to referendums to increase revenues, which also puts more of the funding burden on local property taxes.

Higher education

Public higher education campuses in our region, including UW-Eau Claire, UW-Stout and Chippewa Valley Technical College, are critical to its economic success. They provide matchless value in educating a skilled workforce, research efforts that create businesses and jobs, and related community benefits that enhance the quality of life and serve to attract and retain world-class talent. They have also developed key partnerships that leverage both public and private assets to the benefit of the citizens and the economic health of the region.

Along with sufficient state assistance, reforms are needed to create management structures to address resource limitations, foster innovation to respond to changing needs, and maintain and enhance their economic impact.

✓ ***Thank you for progress made***

- Increased support for education enacted in the 2017-19 budget, with greater funding for K-12 schools and reinvestment in the UW and Technical Colleges systems, including progress towards providing competitive staff salaries.
- Schools in the K12 system moving forward to provide students with more comprehensive academic and career planning, including exposure to real world work-related experiences.
- Regional higher education campuses have participated in strategic initiatives to ensure the continued alignment of higher education programs to meet the talent development needs of our economy.
- Chippewa Valley Technical College's ability to grow in-demand programs, including the addition of new programs like culinary arts, mechanical design technology, and creation of a multi-disciplinary simulated manufacturing center, as well as responding to specific educational needs of local employers.
- Continued support of the initiatives of the Northwest Wisconsin Engineering Consortium to collaboratively create additional engineering programs at UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls and UW-Stout to fill specifically-identified regional needs, including mechanical, materials science and agricultural engineering.

➔ ***Action requested***

K-12

- Review and reform school district revenue limits to reflect objective standards instead of the arbitrary numbers based upon district-specific spending levels of two decades ago. The newly-appointed Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding is a hopeful first step.

Higher Education

- Give local campuses the flexibility and autonomy they need to deploy and manage resources, create effective regional consortiums, make curriculum decisions to address region-specific needs, and maintain excellence in their recognized areas of specialization.
- Specifically provide campuses with management flexibility in operations and procurement, as well as financing and managing building projects that are not taxpayer funded.

◆ **Address long-term transportation needs**

As the Chippewa Valley's population and economic activity continue to grow, a robust, balanced transportation system is critical to the smooth flow of people and freight. State transportation policy must address the needs of our area to ensure that our transportation assets provide economic competitiveness, access to employment and freedom of travel. Priorities include investment in all key modes -- highway, transit, rail and air.

It's widely recognized that current sources of transportation funding are inadequate to meet future needs, particularly with more fuel efficient vehicles producing less gas tax revenue, and changing travel demands related to demographics and travel trends. In 2014, Wisconsin voters overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment to ensure revenues going into the Transportation Fund are used solely for transportation purposes. Earlier, the Wisconsin Commission on Transportation Finance & Policy made specific recommendations on funding needs and sources. Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has taken steps to implement recommendations of the DOT audit released early last year, and the legislature enacted some cost-saving opportunities related to labor costs for transportation projects.

Unfortunately, continued failure to address the big picture of long-term transportation financing has led to delayed projects, large transfers of general purpose revenues to transportation, and continued borrowing has resulted in a multi-fold increase in the percentage of transportation revenues going to debt service.

Action requested

- Progress needs to be made to reach a long-term transportation funding solution sooner rather than later. Transportation is too important to the state's business climate to go much longer without addressing this critical issue and planning for future needs.

- Ensure the specific infrastructure needs of the Chippewa Valley are addressed through state planning activities and resource allocation including:
 - Adequate funding of local roads
 - Good repair and adequate capacity on I-94 and its feeder highways
 - Maintaining essential rail freight services
 - Planning for future passenger rail service
 - Strengthening essential local transit services
 - Maintaining air travel choices from the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport
 - Ensuring access to employment as part of a regional workforce strategy

◆ Accelerate rural broadband expansion

Access to high speed internet is critical for local economies to be competitive in jobs, education and quality of life. There are still many rural and small communities in Wisconsin which do not have reliable, high-speed broadband.

✓ *Thank you for progress made*

Recent Broadband Expansion Grants have includes projects in the Chippewa Valley:

- Dunn County: A grant to 24-7 Telcom a project proposes to build a fiber-to-the-home service past 120 homes and businesses located southwest of Menomonie.
- Completion and development of a 5.4 mile fiber optic network system running through Chippewa Falls, connecting the Riverside Industrial Park with Lake Wissota Business Park

Action requested

- Funding and implementation of broadband must continue to be a high priority as part of the state's comprehensive economic development and workforce initiatives.
- Support continued efforts to streamline implementation of broadband installations and simplify red tape, such as the Broadband Forward program.