

26th Annual

Issues Book

Chippewa Valley Rally



CHAMBER ALLIANCE
Chippewa Falls • Eau Claire • Menomonie

MADISON
FEB. 25. 2020

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- **Leverage the Economic ROI of Public Education** (page 4)
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Greetings from the 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 every day 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.

Strengthening partnerships

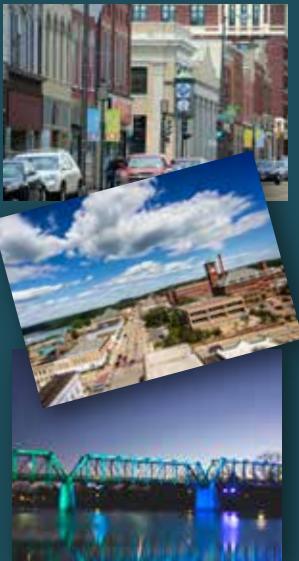
The Chippewa Valley Rally is organized by the Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance – Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie – representing over 2,200 members with more than 55,000 employees. We come to Madison to recognize and strengthen our region's mutually-beneficial relationship with state government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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Scott Rogers
715-834-1204
rogers@eauclairechamber.org



Tim Abraham Photography



Seckora Photography

Chippewa Valley Rally: Schedule

9:45 a.m....Arrive at Park Hotel	
10:00 a.m....Issues briefing and Q&A	Park Hotel - 8th floor
11:10 a.m....Legislative appointments	State Capitol
11:40 a.m....Legislative appointments	State Capitol
12:15 p.m....Luncheon	Park Hotel - 8th floor
- Remarks by Missy Hughes, CEO and Secretary, Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.	
1:45 p.m....Legislative appointments	State Capitol
2:15 p.m....Legislative appointments	State Capitol
2:45 p.m....Legislative appointments	State Capitol
4:00 p.m....Reception	Park Hotel - 8th floor
6:00 p.m....Events conclude	
6:15 p.m....Buses depart Park Hotel	



State investments in our communities

Prudent public investments are driving significant economic vitality in all three of the Chippewa Valley cities, to enhance the quality of life and strengthen economic competitiveness.

The Confluence Project

Approved in the 2015-17 budget, the state's \$15 million contribution to The Confluence Project in Eau Claire (which totals \$85 million including other public, private and philanthropic investments) has proven to be a wise investment for the state, a valuable asset for the region, and a model for effective collaboration between government, education and the private sector. Over 70,000 people attended performances at the Pablo Center at the Confluence in its recently-completed first year of operation and has driven \$100 million in additional private development.

★ Action Requested

PROVIDE VIGOROUS STATE LEADERSHIP ON WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

The workforce shortage continues to be the #1 challenge of the business community in the Chippewa Valley and throughout Wisconsin. 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.

Employers are responding with creative changes in work practices, increased wages and innovating recruiting practices. But it's equally critical that the state takes a strong leadership role to address issues that employers alone cannot solve.

★ Ensure relevant educational and training opportunities are available to meet critical talent needs



Guide and support efforts in public and private education to meet the needs of our 21st century workforce, including Academic and Career Planning. Continue and expand targeted training opportunities. Identify and address specific bottlenecks in the pipeline, such as the critical shortage of nursing faculty. Leverage the economic ROI of public education (see page 4).

Thank you for...

State support of Registered Apprenticeships, College Interns, High School Youth Apprenticeships and current worker training programs

One of the most effective ways to retain talent and introduce students to career-level opportunities is through work-based learning experiences. We appreciate the increased funding and tools that have been provided to the Youth Apprenticeship program, Registered Apprenticeships and College Internships.

These kinds of programs deserve to be continued and enhanced.

The state budget included:

- Full funding of \$5.5 million to support the Youth Apprenticeship work-based learning program for high school students, which now serves over 3,500 individuals in 11 career clusters.



- \$3 million annually for school districts to continue to increase career and technical education offerings.
- \$1 million for equipment for advanced manufacturing classes and programs.
- Continued support for Fast Forward worker training programs.

Recent initiatives to increase participation in college internships have included the new UW System Talent Generator resources, as well as our own regional UWIN (UW Internship Network) collaboration among UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls and UW Stout; and the cooperative Tech Start internship program with Chippewa Valley Technical College and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

★ Help individuals overcome barriers to career employment

Maximize efforts to remove barriers to employment and equip individuals with employability skills, including people with disabilities, ex-offenders, or others who have various challenges to obtain career employment or becoming effective employees.

Thank you for...

The continuing and expanding state role in providing employment training in prisons and other programs to help ex-offenders get on their feet, programs like Project SEARCH providing youth with disabilities with practical employment training, and worker training programs to upskill individuals for better career oriented jobs.

★ Attract and retain talent

It's essential for the state to continue and enhance initiatives to attract and retain talent – including marketing the positive attributes of the state and its regions to attract new talent, encouraging former residents and students to return, highlighting opportunities for transitioning veterans, and keeping Wisconsin graduates in the state.

Thank you for...

Continuation of the Think-Make-Happen talent attraction campaign by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, which provides an essential state role in asserting the attributes of living and working in Wisconsin. Its research-based efforts have been leveraged locally by initiatives like ThinkEauClaire.com, the Chippewa Falls talent attraction website, Make Chippewa Valley, ExploreMenomonie.com and others.

The state budget also provided at least one measure to help attract and retain health care workers with \$230 million in additional funding for direct care workers in Family Care, nursing homes, and individuals receiving personal care services.

★ Enable critical infrastructure enhancements including housing, transportation and broadband

Because of their impact on the daily lives of all workers, state policies and funding in housing, transportation and broadband are closely related to every talent issue. See page 5 for more.

Action Requested

LEVERAGE THE ECONOMIC ROI OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Wisconsin's K-12 and higher education systems are among the state's most valuable assets, essential for Wisconsin to build and maintain its workforce in a skills-based, global economy. It's important for the state to be effective in managing its investment in these resources.

★ Continue progress and innovation in education

- Continue to increase exposure to **Career and Technical Education offerings** in the high schools in an effort to heighten awareness to high school students, parents, teachers and influencers to create a talent pipeline for the future. Ensure that all students have an opportunity or are required to take a CTE course as part of their graduation requirements.
- Promote further enhancement to **degree and credit transfer** between postsecondary institutions for better career pathways and transferability between higher education systems to provide seamless and affordable education.
- Continue to find ways to **upskill the existing workforce** to support business and personal growth. Having a limited available workforce creates challenges for business owners, amplified by a time of demographic transition and critical need for succession planning.
- **Expand the scope of occupations and career clusters available in the high school Youth Apprenticeship program** to cover more in-demand jobs, including expansion of the clusters served from the current 11 to all 16 career clusters.



- Restore Department of Public Instruction funding for high schools who wish to continue to offer **Work Keys exam for the National Career Readiness Certificate**. This program has high potential for students and employers to enhance effective career placement and increase opportunities for progressing to higher-wage jobs. The Eau Claire area has achieved 95% completion of the requirements to become a Work Ready Community, but in 2019 DPI dropped its mandate and funding for high schools to provide the exam to all juniors, prematurely jeopardizing progress in achieving the benefits of this initiative.

Thank you for...

State budget commitments to education: Providing over \$500 million in additional funding for K-12, \$45 million in new outcomes-based funding to the UW System and for increasing state general aid for the Wisconsin Technical College System by \$25 million. This includes the 2 percent UW System salary increases in consecutive years, important to retaining quality faculty and staff and maintaining educational excellence.

UW-Eau Claire Science & Health Sciences Building: \$109 million in the state budget to provide the first phase of funding for the new Science and Health Sciences Building to replace UW-Eau Claire's aging Phillips Hall. This facility will support collaborative research between students and industry partners, and will enhance UWEC's already strong research partnership with Mayo Clinic Health System. The university will use the first phase of funding to design a unified, efficient building, thereby allowing for a shortened construction timeline and saving taxpayer funds. During the 2021-22 budget cycle, the second phase of funding will be needed so construction on the new facility can begin.



Outdated Phillips Hall

UW-Stout South Hall and Heritage Hall: The program revenue bonding approved to renovate UW-Stout's South Hall residence hall at UW-Stout is a sustainable solution to meet the need to provide freshman students with desirable, affordable on-campus housing. We also thank the Legislature for the advance enumeration of a \$70 million renovation of the UW-Stout Heritage Hall academic building, now scheduled for 2023-25 and hope this project remains at legislative priority.

Chippewa Valley Technical College: Continued investment and support to expand dual credit offerings for high school students via high school academies, start college now, and transcribed credit options. CVTC awarded over 17,000 credits to high school students representing nearly \$2.3 million dollars in tuition cost savings. The CTE Technical Incentive Grant awarded to the high schools to fund tuition for students participating in these offerings support these efforts.

Credit transfers: Act 46 (AB 189) signed into law last fall mandates a significant increase in the number of credits guaranteed to transfer between and within University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System. It requires the Board of Regents and the Wisconsin Technical College System Board to promote "program-to-program articulation agreements." This is an important step in the right direction.

★ Action Requested **ENABLE CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Community and economic infrastructure such as broadband, housing, roads and transit are critical components to a vital economy. The state has outsized influence on the availability, effectiveness and resources available of these assets and is also a key workforce priority.

★ Transportation availability and choices

A strong, balanced transportation system is critical to a vibrant economy, quality of life, and access to employment and economic opportunity.

Thank you for...

Long term transportation funding progress in the state budget:

The budget provided critical new ongoing revenue for transportation, including \$465 million overall for transportation projects, maintaining reasonable bonding levels, a 10% increase in local transportation aids, and \$75 million in one-time funding for local project priorities.



Moving forward, it's important to **ensure the specific transportation needs of the Chippewa Valley are addressed** through state planning activities and resource allocation including:

- Providing for a **robust, balanced transportation system** to attract and retain talent, as well as to provide for the effective movement of goods
- Adequate funding of **local roads**
- Support **local hazard mitigation plans**, including updating standards, disaster assistance and funding priorities to address resiliency in the face of an increased rate of significant floods and related events
- **Good repair and adequate capacity on I-94** and its feeder highways
- Maintaining essential **rail freight services**
- Inclusion of our region in state planning for **expanded passenger rail service**, including the public-private partnership initiative being developed by the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition
- Strengthening **essential local transit services**, especially for access to employment as part of a workforce strategy
- **Maintaining air travel choices** from the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport

★ Rural broadband expansion

Continued investment in rural broadband expansion is important to address limited access for individuals in rural communities in northwest and northcentral Wisconsin. Current deficiencies create obstacles to higher education access and quality learning experiences. With Eau Claire situated as the region's healthcare hub and UW-Eau Claire having a foot in Rice Lake with UWEC-Barron County, a major focus of UWEC's partnership with Mayo Clinic will be improving telemedicine and pioneering ways to scale the technology/practice to reach more people.

Thank you for...

Broadband funding in the state budget:

The \$48 million included to expand the Broadband Expansion Grant program helps to reach more under-served areas and represents the largest amount provided to date.

Legislative action to foster telehealth services:

Act 56 (SB 380) signed into law last fall requires the Department of Health Services to treat telehealth services the same as in-person services and ensures Medicaid can reimburse for remote patient care and monitoring services, including allowing patients to receive telehealth services at home or at school, or other non-clinical locations.

★ Access to housing

The availability and affordability of housing is increasingly becoming a barrier to workforce attraction and retention. Local efforts, such as the Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force, are making progress in this area, but it's also important that state policies and programs address these issues.

A UW-Madison report commissioned by the Wisconsin REALTORS® Association last fall confirmed that Wisconsin has a serious workforce housing shortage. It recommended reforms that would help increase housing stock, provide more diverse housing choices, strengthen home ownership and make housing a priority in government policies and strategies. These recommendations should be explored further.

Low income housing tax credit programs are a valuable tool in addressing affordability for individuals making their way out of poverty. However, the funding available for these programs falls far short of need and demand. While these are mostly federally funded programs, they are administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA). The state should pursue avenues to leverage and augment these resources, as well as to ensure all areas of the state benefit from them.

★ Action Requested

ASSURE GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND VALUE

★ Tax burden and local resources

Taxes are a significant part of the budget of any business or citizen, so it's important to hold government to the highest standards in the effective use of taxpayer dollars to meet collective needs.

Thank you for...

Improved tax ranking:

According to the Wisconsin Policy Forum, Wisconsin's tax burden – defined as the total of those taxes as a share of state residents' income – dropped in 2019, a long-running trend attributed both to limited growth in taxes and relatively strong growth in income.

Address the squeeze on local governments and outdated funding formulas:

Despite the overall positive nature of the tax burden carried by Wisconsin residents, local governments in particular face financial challenges based upon revenue and levy limits, as well as long-outdated municipal shared revenue and school funding formulas. This has led to referendums disproportionately increasing property taxes, as well as the imposition of wheel taxes, because they are the only tools available to them. It's time to review the state's promises and restrictions on these units of government, and consider the appropriate balance among property, sales and income taxes.

★ UW Campus flexibility

Give the UW System and 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 the UW-System with management flexibility in operations and procurement.



Tim Abraham Photography

★ Bi-Partisanship

The decisions by voters in the 2018 election resulted in a new reality of divided or shared government, with a Republican legislative branch and Democratic executive branch. We are disappointed that the two parties have not found ways to build relationships across party lines to work together more effectively. Responsibility falls with the leadership of both parties, who may not realize how disenchanted the public is becoming with this situation. We encourage executive and legislative leadership to move forward and make a fresh start.

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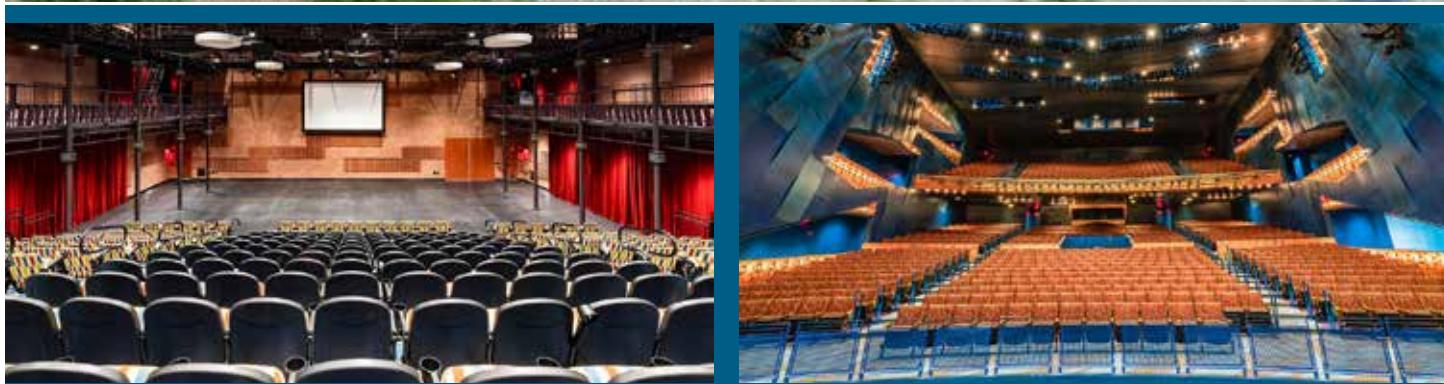


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