



Issues Paper

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Thank you!

Last year we advocated for further research into the overtime for salaried employees rule. We requested that the rule be sent back to the Department of Labor to evaluate

the full impact of this rule. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Healthcare

Expand Health Care Access and Improve Outcomes via Telehealth

Telehealth uses digital technology to connect patients to vital health care services. An important tool in improving health care access, Telehealth expands the geographic reach of providers and removes distance as a barrier to patient care.

A form of telehealth known as remote patient monitoring (RPM) allows patients to collect health data and share it with a distant provider in real time. Daily review of data such as blood pressure, blood glucose, heart rate and weight makes it possible for the provider to identify subtle changes and make timely adjustments to the patient's care.

RPM helps keep people healthier and allows them to live at home longer. It is effective in reducing hospitalizations, readmissions, and lengths of hospital stays—impacting

quality of life and reducing costs.

While the VA, state Medicaid programs and private insurers increasingly recognize telehealth as an innovative and effective method of health care delivery, Medicare coverage for these services lags behind. Medicare denies almost all RPM services due to arbitrary geographic and originating site restrictions that exclude a patient's home.

RECOMMENDATION

Urge the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) to remove all geographic and originating site limitations on telehealth coverage. Additionally, we ask Congress to ensure that telehealth services are incorporated into emerging health care payment models.

Removing Regulatory Barriers to Advancing Value-Based Care

Health providers and systems in the Coulee Region continue to support the movement away from a volume-driven delivery and payment system to one that rewards value-based care. A study by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) found the La Crosse, Wisconsin region to have the lowest utilization of Medicare services per beneficiary than any other region in the nation.

Although steps have been made, the current Medicare reimbursement system rewards volume over value, which is a system that doesn't recognize the quality of care and

is unaligned with medical practice in Western Wisconsin. However, regulatory barriers continue to inhibit innovation and integrated care delivery, such as the existing Stark Law and the Anti-Kickback Statutes.

RECOMMENDATION

We ask Congress to enact regulatory reforms aimed at removing barriers to innovative care models, such as amending the existing Stark Laws and Anti-Kickback Statutes to recognize providers and hospitals embracing community health.



Infrastructure

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Supports Long-term, Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure Funding

- **We can no longer afford to underinvest in the infrastructure**, which Americans rely on in our daily lives. We need proposals that provide improvements to all types of infrastructure throughout the country and address large important projects that make our businesses more competitive by reducing shipping, commuting, water and energy costs.
- **Congress should restore solvency** to the Highway Trust Fund, providing confidence the Federal government can maintain a state of the art infrastructure system, which is essential to efficient product and talent distribution.
- **An infrastructure initiative requires the bipartisan leadership** of Congress and the Trump Administration. This is a generational opportunity to end the cycle of uncertainty which has plagued America's infrastructure network and has the potential to usher in a new era of desperately needed improvements and economic stability. However, this will take leadership and bold, innovative solutions.
- **The three pillars of our region's economy – Agriculture, Tourism and Manufacturing – are entirely dependent on a reliable transportation infrastructure** network that includes roads, bridges, ports and airports.
- **1,393,428 full-time jobs** in Wisconsin in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation infrastructure network. These workers earn \$54.8 billion in wages and contribute an estimated \$10 billion in state and local income, corporate and unemployment

insurance taxes and the federal payroll tax. (TRIP Report, May 2016)

- **Annually, \$264 billion** in goods are shipped from sites in Wisconsin and another \$236 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Wisconsin, mostly by truck. (TRIP Report, May 2016)
- **82% of the goods shipped** annually from sites in Wisconsin are carried by trucks and another 14% are carried by courier services or multiple mode deliveries, which include trucking. (TRIP Report, May 2016)

The 7 Rivers Region is fortunate to have diverse and abundant modes of transportation to support our local businesses and spur economic development. We have the interstate highway system, rail, Mississippi River shipping, and commercial air service directly to Minneapolis, Detroit, and Chicago.

However, our transportation system is aging and crumbling. It is reducing our productivity, adding to the cost of moving products across the country and around the world, and increasing congestion and access to destinations throughout the region.

RECOMMENDATION

Finding a secure, sustainable solution to funding the Highway Trust Fund so projects can be planned in advance and completed efficiently and cost effectively. Ensuring full funding for our aviation and water systems and implementing reforms to the permitting process to reduce costly delays and get projects off the ground more quickly.

Aviation

Airports provide a critical service to regional economies such as La Crosse by providing for the transportation of people and goods throughout the world and encouraging commerce. Without the infrastructure needed to provide these services, communities will find it more difficult to retain and to attract businesses to small communities resulting in additional migration to larger communities. Continuing reductions in Federal funding for airports, increasing regulation, and prohibitive rules are hampering the growth and development of small regional airports

such as those serving most of Wisconsin.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) provides funding to airports through the Aviation Trust Fund to provide the needed infrastructure to serve today's modern aviation fleets. This funding has been stagnant for many years while costs continue to rise, resulting in unfunded infrastructure projects throughout the country. The Passenger Facility Charge program— a charge placed on each ticket sold through an airport—has been held at the \$4.50 since 2000. This important funding mechanism

suffers from stagnation and unnecessary Federal oversight creating regulatory road blocks to airport development. The result of these funding constraints is an ever-increasing local burden on smaller airports and their owners to maintain and operate.

The pilot hour requirements for a first officer were recently increased from 250 hours to 1,500 hours. This change has made it much more challenging to provide enough pilots

to keep regional airlines flying while providing questionable enhancements to safety. The La Crosse Regional Airport has realized a nearly 40% reduction in service since the new regulatory requirements were put in place resulting in 3 out of 4 passengers in our region driving nearly 2.5 hours to a larger metropolitan airport. Congress has the ability to require the FAA to provide training credits for pilot training programs which provide outstanding and safe pilots.

River Infrastructure

La Crosse is the largest port on the Mississippi River in Western Wisconsin. Every year, nearly one million tons of commodities are handled in the La Crosse harbor. Materials such as cement and asphalt for our roads, pig iron for foundries, salt to melt ice, and coal to heat the local university arrive in La Crosse by barge. Soybeans and corn from regional farmers are loaded onto barges where they begin their journey to international markets. As La Crosse is located on Pool 8 of the Upper Mississippi River, tow boats have to travel through 19 locks before they arrive in St. Louis. All but one of these locks was built in the 1930s, a time when steam was the most common form of power. This antiquated system of locks continues to become more unreliable and insufficient with each passing shipping season. Failure to reinvest in this infrastructure will continue to decrease the competitiveness of local agricultural and other industries, and it will leave future generations with an increasing unfunded liability.

Support for the Upper Mississippi River

- Support the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for navigational improvements and ecological restoration for the Upper Mississippi River System. This dual purpose plan will reduce traffic delays and ensure environmental sustainability along the Upper Mississippi River. Congress suspended funding in June of 2011 after nearly a decade of preconstruction engineering and design work.
- Continue to support and fund the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN), which includes the Water Resources Redevelopment Act (WRRDA). In 2016 this water resources action returned to a biennial

process after a nine-year hiatus. This Act is where Congress authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop and maintain critical waterway infrastructure, carry out environmental restoration, and implement flood protection.

- Support the 2017 Federal Policy Platform "Restoring our Natural and Built Infrastructure" presented by the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI). This group, comprised of 75 mayors whose cities (including La Crosse) align the banks of the Mississippi River, presented this plan to several members of the legislative branch, new executive administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on March 2nd, 2017. This plan includes requested support and funding for:
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program
 - Non-Point Source Water Pollution Control Grants (Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 319)
 - Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Loan Funds
 - USGS Water Resources Program
 - Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
 - America's Marine Highway Program Grant Account
 - Navigational and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP)

Tax Reform & Regulation

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Supports Marketplace Fairness Legislation

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Supports the reintroduction of The Marketplace Fairness Act of 2015 (Sen. Enzi/Durban) and the Remote Transaction Parity Act: HR 2775 (Rep. Chaffetz).

Members of the Chamber of Commerce sell a wide selection of products to the marketplace. Because the current system disadvantages brick and mortar businesses, it is time to level the playing field and reform our tax collection system.

- Brick and mortar stores contribute to their state and local economy

every day; it is only fair that their online competitors contribute to the tax base as well.

- The Supreme Court held that only Congress has the authority to regulate interstate commerce. The patchwork of state and local sales tax rules is too complicated to require remote sellers to collect sales taxes, resulting in states and local government not easily enforcing existing sales and use tax laws on out-of-state sales.
- According to a study by the University of Tennessee, the total

estimated uncollected U.S. sales and use tax from all remote sales in 2012 was \$23 billion. For 2015, it was estimated that total U.S. uncollected sales and use taxes increased to almost \$26 billion annually.

- Federal legislation would provide a pathway for states and localities across the country to collect up to an estimated \$26 billion annually in uncollected tax revenue to balance their budgets by collecting taxes already owed instead of increasing taxes.

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Supports Comprehensive Tax Reform

The Chamber is comprised of 685 businesses, many spanning multiple generations. Our members employ thousands and rely on a competitive tax code that is fair and addresses both corporate and individual rates.

- Our current tax system is

fundamentally flawed and discourages economic growth. Because distributors and manufacturers are of critical importance to our nation's economy, any effort to rewrite the federal tax code should result in a balanced,

fiscally responsible plan.

- We need comprehensive tax reform that simplifies the code and both reduces the corporate tax rate and includes permanent lower rates for businesses organized as flow-through entities.

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Strongly Opposes LIFO Repeal

- Tax reform proposals that include a repeal of the "Last-In, First-Out" (LIFO) accounting method would bring harm to thousands of small businesses across the country. It is a mistake to believe LIFO is a "tax loophole" or that it is set

to disappear from use; neither is accurate.

- LIFO is an established, widely-accepted inventory accounting method that has been used by large and small companies throughout the U.S. economy since the 1930s.

Repealing LIFO would result in tax increases for thousands of small businesses, and could force many of the smallest to close, freeze hiring, reduce 401(k) contributions or scale-back planned expansions.

The La Crosse Chamber of Commerce Opposes Reductions to the Mortgage Interest Deduction

The Mortgage Interest Deduction has been in place as long as there has been an Internal Revenue Code. Its value is capitalized into the price of all houses. Decreasing the value of the Mortgage Interest Deduction, even for just a limited group, would hurt all homeowners because of the chilling effect a reduction would cause in the market.

The La Crosse Chamber Encourages Investment in Skilled Craft Education.

Small businesses rely on the institutional knowledge of an aging workforce that is retiring at a pace that will not slow down for years to come. This only increases our need to replace these valuable and knowledgeable assets. The La Crosse Chamber supports the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, which updates the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The bill reforms programs needed to develop the next generation of workers needed to meet the demands in the distribution, construction and plumbing industry.



Workforce

Gainful Employment

Higher education is still facing the primary issue of Gainful Employment (GE) regulations which are intended to hold institutions with certificate and diploma programs accountable for the debt and future earnings of their students. Areas of concern include:

- The U.S. Department of Education has decided to delay the implementation of the Borrower Defense of Repayment regulations. Please contact the Department of

Education in support of the new Administration's proposed delay of implementing both regulations (RIN 1840-AD19 and RIN 1840-AD22).

- The American Association of Cosmetology Schools (AACCS) has developed a set of fair and balanced revisions to the reauthorization of Higher Education Act (HEA) that promotes reforms designed to ensure quality career and technical education

while taking into account program integrity, consumer protections, and taxpayers' interests.

RECOMMENDATION

Include the drafted provision Section 310 of H.R. 5926, House Report 114-699-Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill in what will likely become an Omnibus bill completed shortly before the current Continuing Resolution ends on April 28, 2017.

Persons with Disabilities

People with disabilities continue to have challenges that impact their ability to work and live healthy, independent lives. Our foremost concerns are proposals that limit employment and living options for people with disabilities.

DEFINING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The term "people with disabilities" defines a diverse population. They include people who may have minor physical limitations to those with multiple, severe challenges including developmental or intellectual deficiencies combined with dangerous behavior and physical challenges. All programming options are needed to address the unique needs of each individual with disabilities so they may have effective opportunities to gain or remain independent.

We Oppose:

- Restrictions on work within skill development work centers for individuals, who may not be able to work in community-based

jobs, but can work and be paid commensurate wages in center based facilities.

- Block Grants that may lead to decreased funds and decreased support for our most vulnerable citizens.

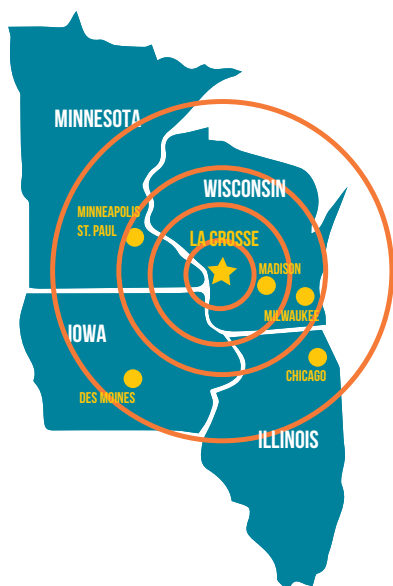
We Support:

- Person-centered planning that allows people with disabilities choices among a wide variety of service options to fit their broad range of needs and preferences. Reduced regulations would support innovation and choice for people with disabilities.
- Employment opportunities for both young and senior individuals with disabilities in positions that fit their wants, needs, ambitions and abilities.
- Increasing rates paid for services for people with disabilities. Flat reimbursement rates for many years have led to low wages, minimal skills training and thin

organizational infrastructures to support workers who assist people with disabilities. Rural areas are of particular concern where economies of scale often do not exist.

- Continuation of the 14(c) special minimum wage provision in the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows wage determination based on productivity of people with disabilities compared to prevailing labor rates. This law allows the opportunity to earn a wage and have pride in accomplishments while being supported and trained. These individuals, who have significant barriers to employment, benefit from the employment training and experience offered by pre-vocational employment facilities.
- We encourage government officials to visit organizations that provide services to people with disabilities to better understand independent living and community integration opportunities and challenges.

OUR TRI-STATE ECONOMY



THINKING BEYOND BORDERS

With La Crosse's location along the Wisconsin border, our labor shed comes from a tri-state area to fuel our businesses. Our workers travel as far as 60 miles to their positions in the La Crosse area. Combining our workforce opportunities with our retail options, La Crosse is an economic destination, pulling in individuals who come to earn and spend their income. Our economy does not recognize borders.

A WELL POSITIONED COUNTY

MADISON

143 miles - 2 hours 18 minutes

MINNEAPOLIS

160 miles - 2 hours 31 minutes

MILWAUKEE

210 miles - 3 hours 30 minutes

DES MOINES

272 miles - 3 hours and 53 minutes

CHICAGO

283 miles - 4 hours and 43 minutes



LA CROSSE AT GLANCE

136,749

LA CROSSE METRO
POPULATION

51,320

LA CROSSE CITY
POPULATION

29

MEDIAN AGE

3

HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

2

MEDICAL
INSTITUTIONS

ABOUT LA CROSSE COUNTY



RETAINING OUR TOP TALENT

TOP 10

Ranked number for small cities in the US where business is thriving

AMERICA'S BEST 50

Gundersen Health System received *Healthgrades* "America's Best 50 Hospitals" in 2014 & 2015

FORBES #50

Forbes ranks La Crosse #50 in the nation in "Best places for business and careers."

FOURTH BEST SMALL CITY

Inc. Magazine named La Crosse the nation's Fourth Best Small City for Doing Business

15TH BEST CITY

Named the 15th Best City in America to Do Business by *Inc Magazine*

EASY TO RETAIN, WORKING TO ATTRACT - EMPLOYMENT

From those who grew up in the area to those who came here for school, La Crosse is a place where people want to raise their children. They value our scenic beauty, our outdoor recreational opportunities, our high-quality education system and our close proximity to larger metropolitan areas. Once people come to La Crosse to work, go to school or play, they have a hard time leaving.

With the tight labor market, La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce is working to remove our region's "hidden gem" pride. We cannot afford to be one of the state's best kept secrets. With a thriving young professional climate and businesses prepared to work together, watch for La Crosse to set the tone for how we attract talent who is choosing to live in Wisconsin and its four-seasons of splendor.

TOP EMPLOYERS - HEALTHCARE

Healthcare is a major industry in the La Crosse area with Gundersen Health System and Mayo Clinic Health System being two of the top three employers in the county. Our manufacturing base remains strong.

TOP 5 EMPLOYERS IN LA CROSSE

Organization	Employees	Business Type
Gundersen Health System	6000	Healthcare
Ashley Furniture Industries, Inc.	3000	Manufacturer
Mayo Clinic Health System	3000	Healthcare
Trane	2350	Manufacturer
Fort McCoy	2215	Government



3,011

NUMBER OF
BUSINESSES

59,715

NUMBER OF
EMPLOYEES

3.4%

UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE

\$39,835

AVERAGE WAGE

\$20,592

PER CAPITA INCOME

LA CROSSE - A WORKING COMMUNITY