



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Joint Finance Should Reconsider the Gutting of Worker Protections from the Budget In Light of Broad Public Support

(MADISON, Wis.) – Governor Evers’ budget contained important worker and taxpayer protection provisions. It reinstated state prevailing wage laws (which protect against low road out of state contractors winning public works projects), repealed a provision mandating that trade unions give people membership rights without paying membership dues, and repealed a statute restricting local municipalities’ contract rights and freedoms to protect their local public works projects. Last week, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), along a party-line vote, removed these important worker protections from the budget.

“The 15 Building Trades and the 40,000 workers of those trades are deeply troubled by the actions of the Joint Finance Committee,” said Dave Branson, president of the Wisconsin Building Trades Council (WBTC). “The worker protections that have been stripped from the budget are intended to protect blue-collar workers in Wisconsin and ensure that taxpayer dollars on public workers projects are used to the maximum benefit of the Wisconsin economy.”

The public likewise supports the worker and taxpayer protections. In a recent poll, 83% of likely voters believe that bids for public works should include comparable wages and benefits for workers as those in the same trades received elsewhere in the state. Sixty-one percent specifically support prevailing wage laws. In other words, the public understands that public works projects should stimulate the local economy by properly paying Wisconsin workers.

“In a recent release, ABC of Wisconsin claimed that it has ‘900 construction employers’ that support the JFC decision to erode worker protection. However, 25% of ABC’s members are accountants, lawyers, bankers and suppliers. Only 9% of their members are general contractors,” said Branson. “While the WBTC respects that a trade association represents the interest of its members, we think it is important that JFC members understand that ABC represents a very small percentage (.05%) of the 13,000+ construction employers in Wisconsin.”

About the poll: Public Opinion Strategies conducted this statewide survey from March 3-5, 2019. ***See the attached memorandum and presentation from Public Opinion Strategies (POS).***

The Wisconsin Building Trades Council is comprised of 15 Building Trades unions and represents 40,000 building trades’ members in the state. WBTC is committed to building a skilled workforce for a growing Wisconsin.