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November 6, 2015

Senator Jon Erpenbach  
Room 104 South  
Wisconsin State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53707

Hand Delivered

Dear Senator Erpenbach:

Real people with real families found out this week that they might lose their jobs. I am committed to helping these individuals and their families.

These workers need our help and they need us to work together. Instead, your letter appears to want to look for someone to blame. Here are the facts:

Officials at Kraft Heinz shocked us this past week when they announced plans to close Oscar Mayer. According to media accounts, they surprised their workers, the union, the city, the county, and the state.

These same reports show that Madison Mayor Paul Soglin was in contact with company officials in August of this year. I am not aware of any contact that was made to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation or to my office after that meeting.

If Mayor Soglin was concerned about the possibility of losing jobs at Oscar Mayer after the August meeting, why did he not contact the state for help? Local leaders across the state frequently contact my office and the staff of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation with requests for help with employers in their communities, and we work with them.

Some have tried to make this a partisan issue. A close look at the facts shows that Kraft Heinz announced on Wednesday the closing of seven plants. Four of the seven were in states lead by Democrat Governors, two were in states lead by Republican Governors and one was in Ontario, Canada. The decision to announce the closings was not because of Democrat or Republican policies. It was because of decisions made by a large corporation, and the decisions made by this large corporation hurt families in our state.

These policies seem to be driven by the merger of Kraft Foods Group and H.J. Heinz Co. that was engineered by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway and 3G Capital.

Prior to the merger driven by these two multi-billion dollar conglomerates, the staff of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation worked with Kraft Foods Group. In July 2013, Kraft was made eligible to earn \$194,800 over three years in economic development tax credits based on a planned \$4 million investment in their Madison offices. In April 2014, they informed the state that they would not be able to utilize the tax credits and voluntarily withdrew from the award.

Staff at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation learned of the Kraft Heinz decision this week, like the other state, county, and regional officials. The Deputy Secretary reached out to the head of governmental affairs to offer assistance to keep the jobs in Wisconsin. The Kraft Heinz officials indicated that their decision followed an in-depth analysis of their global operations and was final.

I refuse to accept that and am seeking a meeting with leadership of Kraft Heinz. Instead of pointing fingers at each other, we need to work together to help the workers and families being hurt by this corporate decision.

Looking ahead, we are going to do everything we can—working with city, county, and regional leaders—to keep the Oscar Mayer jobs here in Wisconsin. We are also going to actively work with the same leaders on a parallel track, in the event Kraft Heinz does not respond to our offers, to prepare to help workers find good-paying jobs in the area.

Overall, the State of Wisconsin is moving in the right direction. The unemployment rate in Wisconsin is down to 4.3 percent, which is a 14-year low. The labor participation rate is 67.4 percent, which is five points better than the national rate. And the unemployment rate in Dane County is 2.7 percent—the lowest in the state.

Still, we need to work hard to protect middle class jobs like the ones at Oscar Meyer. Instead of pointing fingers, let us join hands and work together to help these workers and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Walker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Walker  
Governor