

“When someone comes to our office with a proposal for bringing high quality jobs to Wisconsin, we don’t ask if those jobs will go to Democrats or Republicans. We don’t ask whether the people creating the jobs are Democrats or Republicans. All we ask is whether we have an opportunity to help Wisconsinites support their families and communities through honest, hard work for fair pay. If the answer is yes, then we go for it with all we’ve got.”

Herb Kohl

Building a Strong Economy on a Base of Solid Jobs

As a young man growing up in a family that turned a small neighborhood grocery into a successful national retail chain – as the president of Kohl’s running a business that gave steady employment to thousands of Wisconsinites– Senator Kohl learned the values of hard work and American opportunity that drove his economic agenda in the Senate. Starting from the premise that jobs are not a partisan issue, he worked across the aisle and across Wisconsin to attract and sustain vital businesses, big and small. He sponsored federal initiatives that build on Wisconsin’s traditional strength in manufacturing, agriculture, and high tech innovation; put in place training programs that prepare Wisconsinites for the jobs of the future; and pursued national policies to create an environment in which business thrives and families prosper.

Said President Barack Obama: “During his 23 years in the United States Senate, Herb’s invaluable perspective as the long-time head of a family-owned business made him an unwavering voice for working families, small business owners, and seniors...Herb’s dedication to American families and businesses remains evident today in the robust farming and manufacturing sector he helped foster in his home state of Wisconsin.”

Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Throughout his tenure, Kohl championed the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s [Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program](#), a public-private partnership that provides technical support to small and medium manufacturers through 1400 technical experts located in 59 centers across the United States and in Puerto Rico. Since MEP arrived in Wisconsin in 1998, its two centers have created or retained [over 13,000 high quality manufacturing jobs with almost \\$2 billion in economic impact throughout the state.](#)

William Henry, president of American Laser Products, Inc., a manufacturer employing 37 people in Middleton, Wisconsin, [said of the Wisconsin MEP program](#): “I am convinced that without (it), American Laser Products would not have achieved the growth that we have.” [Added Charlie Leiby](#), who, with the help of WMEP turn a one-man business located in his garage into a a custom machining and fabrication firm, in the process creating 44 high quality jobs in Waupaca, “WMEP has played a key role in helping us improve performance (and) quality.”

Since 1996, when he advocated for the [MEP funding](#) that allowed Wisconsin to join the program, Kohl has crafted, refined, and pushed bills to improve MEP and provide it with adequate resources. In [2007](#) and [2010](#), Kohl introduced bipartisan legislation to set up MEP, and in both instances, those bills became public law: the former as part of the [America Competes Act of 2007](#); the latter as part of the [American Competes Reauthorization of 2010](#).

But establishing the program was only half the battle. During few years of this century, when the Administration undertook what Kohl called an “inexcusable” effort to eliminate MEP, Kohl gathered senators from both sides of the aisle to apply constant pressure to Congress and the White House to keep MEP adequately funded. Kohl confronted two Commerce secretaries over their lack of support for MEP, at one point asking Secretary Carlos Gutierrez in frustration: “I know budgets are tight, [but are] you saying we cannot afford to invest...in a program that is helping manufacturers keep jobs in the United States?”

Kohl’s persistence paid off. For over a decade, and despite budgetary pressures, MEP has received the resources it needs to continue to help small manufacturers in Wisconsin and across the nation. For his efforts, the American Small Manufacturers Coalition has named Kohl a “champion for small manufacturers.”

“Sen. Kohl has been a tireless booster of small and medium manufacturers. He understands the value of the MEP network and how we make a difference for American manufacturing,” said Buckley Brinkman, executive director of WMEP. “Sen. Kohl has

“Luckily, Senator Kohl is on the job...his efforts to maintain the MEP program means a lot more than all the talk from other politicians.”

“Kohl’s Fight for State Jobs,” Capitol Times, March 7, 2008

fought for the MEP and marshaled support in Congress for our mission. His efforts led to increased funding and a higher profile for our system. Because of his tenacity and dedication, WMEP has been able to help manufacturers generate tens of thousands of jobs in Wisconsin.”

Wisconsin Manufacturing and National Security

When Senator Herb Kohl came to Washington in 1989, Wisconsin ranked dead last in the percentage of defense dollars that flowed to the state. With politically risky stands against bloated weapons programs such as “Star Wars” missile defense and the D-5 Trident missile, Kohl staked out a position in his first term as an ardent deficit hawk dedicated to reducing wasteful defense spending. However, he understood from the beginning that bringing the Pentagon budget under control was not just a matter of slashing systems.

“Here was a state with a long history of skilled manufacturing, a high tech corridor emerging in the Chippewa Valley, and top ranked national universities doing leading edge research and development,” remembers Kohl. “If decisions in Washington were being made with consideration for getting the best value for the taxpayer dollar and the best equipment for our troops – and not just on the basis of partisan, backroom deals -- there is no way Wisconsin should have been at the bottom of the list for DOD contracts.”

So Kohl set out to convince Washington that Wisconsin has something unique to contribute to

Today, I was honored to participate in laying the keel for the USS Milwaukee in Marinette, Wisconsin. Littoral Combat Ships like the Milwaukee are a triumph for both the United States Navy and for the State of Wisconsin. For the Navy, they are the ship of the future – light, fast, and flexible. For Wisconsin, they mean thousands of jobs and a rebirth of shipbuilding on the Great Lakes...

Budget cuts are putting pressure on every government program, which makes the LCS more important than ever. To remain a global force, our Navy needs a more flexible, cost effective fleet. The LCS is a vital part of that plan.

But we celebrated more than a new ship today. Every time I visit the shipyard I see the high expectations Marinette Marine sets for themselves. The workforce is second to none, and will remain so for years to come. New workers get more than paychecks: they acquire skills and experience learned from almost sixty years of shipbuilding at Marinette Marine. And there are going to be a lot of new employees. By 2013 Marinette expects to have about 2,000 workers at the shipyard and suppliers across Wisconsin are hiring so they can handle the increased demand from Marinette. All told, the LCS will mean thousands of Wisconsin jobs for years to come.

I worked with the Secretary of the Navy and other officials to bring the contract to Wisconsin and finalize the deal in the Senate. It was truly an honor to be present today for the keel laying and to see firsthand that the USS Milwaukee represents the best of American shipbuilding. It has the finest craftsmanship from an outstanding workforce. It's affordable for the Navy in a time of tight budgets, and it gives our sailors the tools they need to keep America safe and protect our interests around the world.

Senator Herb Kohl, on attending the keel-laying ceremony for the USS Milwaukee in Marinette, WI, October 27, 2011

the nation's defense. He worked with prominent Wisconsin employers such as Rayovac, Oshkosh Corp., and GE Healthcare to create thousands of jobs supporting the military through the production of products from advanced batteries to

“Herb Kohl... has worked effectively both for his state and for our nation during his fruitful tenure in this great institution.”

**Senator Joseph Lieberman,
chairman, Senate Homeland
Security and Government
Affairs Committee,
May 13, 2011**

innovative materials to heavy trucks to computerized weapons and flight systems to groundbreaking medical technology.

Most recently, Kohl helped Marinette Marine secure a contract to build ten littoral combat ships, bringing

2100 new jobs to the shipyard, as many as 5000 jobs for subcontractors and suppliers throughout Wisconsin, and \$2.6 billion in new economic activity to the state (see sidebar).

Kohl won a place on the Senate Appropriations Committee's Defense Subcommittee in July of 2001, in part because of his knack for matching military buyers with innovative, efficient Wisconsin companies. And his almost a quarter century of work making sure Washington understands the value and opportunity to be found in the Wisconsin manufacturing sector has paid off: In 2011, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Wisconsin had gone from the bottom

Five thousand jobs get your attention. When Senator Kohl heard about the Littoral Combat Ship and the potential it had to revive the Wisconsin economy he focused like a laser on making it happen. He met with company officials on a regular basis to get updates on the contract proposal. As the award date got closer he was constantly urging Lockheed and Marinette to lower their price and be as aggressive as possible. He told Bob Stevens, the CEO of Lockheed, “This is going to be decided on price alone. The Navy supports both designs, so price is key.”

The decision to split the buy and award ten ships to each company came as a surprise and a mixed blessing. The good news was we were assured of getting at least ten ships and an opportunity to prove to the Navy that Marinette could build high quality ships at a low price. The bad news was that the split buy would need Congressional approval – and there wasn't much time.

The Navy's decision to split the buy was made in early November, but the price in the company's bids would only be fixed for a few more weeks. If we didn't get Congressional approval by the time the bids expired the whole deal would fall apart. The only bill that this provision could be attached to was the Continuing Resolution which avoids a government shutdown. This was a high stakes situation.

Concerned that Congress wouldn't act in time, Senator Kohl encouraged Lockheed to work with their suppliers to extend their bids for a few more weeks until the end of December. He then started working the phones and the Senate floor to make sure that the approval of the split buy made it through Congress. He spoke several times with the CEO's of Lockheed and Marinette, the Secretary of the Navy, and the White House. On the Senate floor he worked closely with Senators Levin, Sessions, and Inouye to get the language in the bill. He faced the objections of some senior Senators who disliked the entire program and wanted to kill it and start over. Without Senator Kohl's dogged efforts from day one, it is possible the entire LCS program would have been scuttled.

*Chad Metzler, Legislative Director for
Senator Kohl*

of the list to ["16th per capita in bringing home Pentagon dollars."](#)

Senator Kohl has always uniquely understood the value of federal research dollars to Wisconsin. He saw that research advances understanding, understanding brings innovation and innovation leads to new products and increased manufacturing in Wisconsin. A real world example is Rayovac, who with Senator Kohl's assistance over the years brought the majority of its manufacturing back to the state from China, as well as its world headquarters.

Gearing Up for the Jobs of the Future

Senator Herb Kohl brought the lessons he learned building a thriving business to his efforts to advance Wisconsin's manufacturing industry. "At Kohl's we were always learning, constantly looking for the cutting edge technologies and efficient methods that would bring our customers better and better value," said Kohl. "I knew Wisconsin industries would have to do the same if we were going to remain a manufacturing powerhouse."

"Thanks to [Kohl], our nation's leading laboratories will continue to have prompt access to the world's most advanced computing tools."

**Lester T. Davis, Cray Research executive vice president, Chippewa Falls operations and chief technical officer
June 25, 1992**

In his first few months in office, Kohl teamed up with Rep. Dave Obey to put supercomputers from Cray Industries –founded by [Seymour Cray, the "father of supercomputing" and Chippewa Falls native](#) -- in two federal agencies. Kohl later used his position on the Governmental Affairs Committee to streamline the process by which the national labs procure supercomputers so the labs could buy the American-made, superior Cray machines they needed, a bipartisan initiative seen as a win-win for the federal agencies and the nascent Chippewa Falls high-tech corridor. In 1996, Kohl helped Cray win a trade dispute with Japan, who had allowed their national supercomputer manufacturer to bid on a contract with the National Science Foundation with an unfairly dumped product.

Of course, Kohl realized that Wisconsin had the skilled workers and the business friendly environment to support more high-tech enterprises than just Cray Industries. So in 2002, Kohl won federal backing for a sophisticated communications network to attract more businesses to the Chippewa Valley. Today Cray, though a global business,

keeps all of its high-skilled manufacturing jobs in Chippewa Falls and has been joined there by other successful computer and software companies, many started by former Cray employees.

Kohl also pushed for the establishment of a program to help small manufacturers across the state and nation take advantage of the type of supercomputing technology developed in the Chippewa Valley, supported research on the next generation of breakthrough technologies through the national Advanced Technology Program, and sponsored training for older workers facing new technologies at their jobs.

And long before “green jobs” were part of the political conversation, Kohl was encouraging Wisconsin industries and the federal government to invest there. Starting in the early 1990s, Kohl championed USDA’s Forest Products Laboratory in Madison. This unique partnership between government, industry, and academia hosts research on how to use forest resources in ways that are both commercial and sustainable – an imperative in a state like Wisconsin with both abundant forests and a large paper industry.

[Said Kohl at the 2007 groundbreaking](#) of the Forest Products Laboratory’s state-of-the-art facility, businesses and consumers alike would benefit from research on “safer homes, safer water quality, sustainable development, and new fuel resources. Those are really important things.”

Kohl sought similar opportunities to team Wisconsin businesses with the federal government to create jobs in businesses with sustainable practices and products. He worked on legislation standardizing the energy efficiency scale for water heaters, so innovative companies like A.O. Smith of Milwaukee would get credit for their green products; authored a bill to encourage groundbreaking solar

Recently, President Obama visited our great state and saw firsthand how Wisconsin is leading the way for a new energy economy. In Manitowoc, he saw companies making strides in energy efficiency, lighting technology and wind turbines.

Had he continued travelling through the state, the president would have seen Wisconsin companies making advanced batteries, businesses breaking new ground in building retrofits, and farmers turning methane gas into electricity.

Also, he would have seen our world-class colleges and universities undertaking research that has the potential to make America truly energy independent. I’m proud that the University of Wisconsin at Madison is host to the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center, one of three centers established by the US Department of Energy, and the only one based at an academic institution.

In Washington, our job is to help businesses and students alike in this effort that will make us competitive on a global scale and create good paying jobs for generations.

**Senator Herb Kohl, welcoming participants at the eighth annual Green Energy Summit in Milwaukee
March 15, 2011**

light pipe technology pioneered by Orion Energy Systems in Manitowoc; and pushed a bipartisan initiative extending the tax credit for the purchase of medium and heavy duty hybrid trucks.

Kohl secured support for Wisconsin institutions – such as the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation, Johnson Controls, Inc., Eaton Corporation, the University of Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College – both to develop and install technologies for energy efficient buildings and to train workers in green construction. He also helped put in place the Milwaukee Green Jobs Initiative creating internships and adult training for green jobs.

"These areas are going to play a major role in the future economic development of this state," said George Stone of Milwaukee Area Technical College preceding the 2011 Green Energy Summit in Milwaukee. "The sooner we get into this game, the sooner we start investing, the better for everybody."

Wisconsin's diverse workforce has made our state great... We have a longstanding tradition of hard work and dedication to family and community.

**Kohl Labor Day Column,
"Honoring the American Dream,"
August 26, 2008**

Training the Workforce of Tomorrow

When Herb Kohl was president of Kohl's, he was known for interviewing every single employee the company hired – right down to the part-time baggers. "You can have a great product, fancy stores, the latest technology," explains Kohl, "but in the end, it is the people who work in a business who determine whether it will succeed or fail."

Kohl's early experience convinced him that a well trained workforce is the key to economic growth – both in Wisconsin and across the nation. In the mid-1990s, he helped establish the Manufacturing Skills Standards

Council to standardize training in the manufacturing sector. Into the 21st century, he championed other national programs for technical training, such as the Perkins Act, Youthbuild, the Department of Labor's On-the-Job Training grants, and Job Corps. And he introduced legislation making older workers eligible for federally funded training programs.

In 2008, as the recession began to take its toll, Kohl learned that a little known provision in the budget was going to force states to give up \$250 million in federal funds put by for workforce programs. “I remember thinking, I can’t believe how short-sighted this is. Remember, in the first three months of 2008, the economy shed 240,000 jobs and 7 million Americans were unemployed,” remarked Kohl.

So, Kohl gathered a bipartisan group of senators to fight the drain on states’ worker training resources. Led by Kohl, they convinced Congress and the White House both to restore the money and to add more as part of the economic stimulus bill – a total of \$1 billion targeted to help at least 260,000 workers. Of course, Kohl’s particular interest was the workers of Wisconsin, and he fought to make sure that proven job training programs in the state received the support they needed to bolster working families and invigorate the flagging state economy. “With the right program model, we can effectively bridge job seekers with meaningful employment,” said Paula H. Penebaker, president and CEO of YWCA Greater Milwaukee, where Kohl helped direct a Department of Labor grant for the Supporting Families Through Work program. “This grant is a tremendous opportunity to empower others to provide for their families and move beyond poverty and would not have been possible without the leadership of Senator Kohl...”

Kohl maintained a career-long relationship with the Blackhawk Technical College serving the Janesville area long dominated by the auto industry. When GM’s Janesville facility was operating, Kohl convinced the federal government to invest funds in the college to teach workers the state-of-the-art skills that would enable that plant to turn out GM’s new products lines. Unfortunately, GM’s Janesville operations did not survive the bankruptcy of GM, so Kohl stepped in again, making sure the college had the resources to help the 1200 workers and families directly affected, as

Danielle Pakes: Forging Her Future

For most young women, graduating from high school is a significant milestone. Danielle Pakes achieved that milestone while earning her welding diploma and becoming a new mother – all in the same year.

Danielle was first introduced to welding by accident. However, she quickly discovered she...had a knack for it...That’s when she turned to Blackhawk Technical College.

“At that time, I was still living on the family farm – milking cows, feeding calves, helping them whenever they needed help. And I had just become a mom.”

...As a graduate of the BTC welding program, Danielle had experience in welding structural steel, aluminum, stainless steel, and other metals as well as the ability to read blueprints and create welding sketches and layouts. Just two days after receiving her high school diploma, she landed her first job with J.P. Cullen & Son, a Janesville construction firm.

Now she’s building a strong future for her and her son. “It’s an amazing feeling...to be providing for him just doing something I like is really great.”

[Blackhawk Technical College, “Success Stories,” 2012 website](#)

well as those from related fields, such as auto suppliers, who lost their jobs.

Today, Blackhawk Technical College has over 12,000 enrollees training and retraining in more than 100 technical fields. The college commissioned a rigorous economic analysis of the impact it has on the Wisconsin economy: it found that their training accounted for \$58.8 million in annual earnings in the region.

Blackhawk President Thomas Eckert recalled how Kohl's efforts allowed the college to respond to the record demand after the GM plant closing by "providing aid directly to students, opening additional sections and cohorts, and hiring the staff needed to train and support students." He concluded that Kohl's intervention "literally transformed lives and saved families."

Kohl has advocated for training in fields as diverse as the state economy: conservation, nursing, meat inspection, green energy, dentistry, construction, pediatrics, trucking, gerontology, urban agriculture, and, of course, manufacturing. "Wisconsin is a state full of industrious, talented people," said Kohl. "Getting them the training they need to achieve their full potential is the key to maximizing the quality of life of our working families and the quantity of successful business in Wisconsin."