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Statement on Wisconsin Minimum Wage:

Milwaukee Democrat Zepnick: Wage needs to be tied to cost-of-living increases, will help boost state revenues and reduce budget deficit

Milwaukee - State Representative Josh Zepnick (D-Milwaukee) is encouraged by new economic data, which shows strong job growth in the metro Milwaukee area. Zepnick, serving his second term as a State Legislator on Milwaukee's South Side, noted that Governor Doyle and his team in state government have turned a weak economy and 14 years of cronyism and mismanagement of state agencies under Republican administrations into a growing economic pie for Wisconsin citizens and taxpayers.

Zepnick has played a key role in the past several years along with other Assembly Democrats in pressing for an increased statewide minimum wage; he joined other Milwaukee legislators at a public hearing at City Hall, 200 East Wells, at 9am today, January 21, 2005.

"Along with this good news on the jobs front, we should get moving on a higher minimum wage which affects workers at the lowest rung of the ladder. **There is strong non-partisan research showing that raising the minimum wage has a net positive effect to the economy—increasing both the number of new entrants into the labor market and lifting wages across the board.**" Zepnick added, "Much of this is due to the fact that lower-income wage earners spend more of their income on 'short-term, pressing need purchases' with those extra wages...which helps keep this growing economy humming."

"Governor Doyle's **GROW Wisconsin** is a series of initiatives which strengthens Wisconsin's infrastructure, all geared toward making state government work smarter and expand our economy, while promoting a quality of life that makes us all proud to live in Wisconsin. For example, the **Governor's Council on Workforce Investment** (Rep. Zepnick is a member) has been hard at work over the last two years and will soon be ready to unveil initiatives that help Wisconsin workers and firms compete in today's global economy for the kind of high quality, high-wage jobs once the everyday expectation in my community in Milwaukee," Zepnick stated.

"We still have a lot of work to do. Make no mistake, there are still too many people out of work and too many stuck in jobs that do not pay enough or otherwise hold people back from their potential. But Wisconsin is on the right track and we have great evidence that we are making progress," Zepnick said.