

FINALLY! An Administration That Gets It.

On February 6-7, 2019, Construction Business Group hosted its 3rd Annual Winter Conference at the Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. Nearly 150 building trade professionals, contractor association staff, contractor executives, utility representatives and government officials attended the two-day conference.

We had an amazing line-up of speakers and topics. **Governor Tony Evers** spoke about his vision for Wisconsin, and **WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson** gave the crowd his transportation funding outlook. **DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman** opened the conference with insight into plans for reprioritizing enforcement at the DWD. **Attorney General Josh Kaul** participated in a panel discussion with other notable guests on combatting payroll fraud in the construction industry, a growing problem that makes it hard for law-abiding signatory contractors to fairly compete for work.

Common themes developed over the two-day conference. The new administration:

- 1) understands the importance of investment in infrastructure to Wisconsin's economic health;
- 2) respects the hardworking men and women of the construction trades; and 3) intends to hold contractors who are breaking the law and exploiting workers accountable so that law abiding contractors can fairly compete. The Governor, Attorney General and Secretaries were not just giving lip service to these issues during CBG's conference.

Governor Evers announced the same themes to all residents of Wisconsin during his 2019-21 budget address on February 28. Governor Evers proposed \$608 million in new revenue to begin fixing the state's roads and bridges. The increase in revenue derives from an 8 cent gas tax increase and higher heavy truck and titling fees. However, the tax and fee increases are largely offset by Governor Evers' proposal to eliminate the regressive Minimum Markup law on gasoline, which can cost taxpayers 12 cents or more per gallon. Governor Evers' budget also substantially reduces bonding for transportation. Less borrowing is better for the Wisconsin economy and future generations.

In addition to outlining bold and meaningful funding options for funding transportation, Governor Evers clearly signaled his support for working men and women, as well as the construction industry, by calling for the reinstatement of Wisconsin's Prevailing Wage Laws, the repeal of the "Right to Work" law, return of municipal discretion to use PLAs for their projects, and the implementation of a middle-class tax cut.

Given that the Republicans control both the Senate and Assembly, it seems unlikely that Governor Evers' proposals will survive the budget process intact. However, Governor Evers is keeping his campaign promises. It appears that we *finally* have an administration that understands and respects the construction industry and intends to fight for what is best for all Wisconsin residents.