

Today's report card: Updates in workforce and state advocacy

Congratulations to the Class of 2022 Graduates! I'm very proud of the many accomplishments of the graduating seniors and the connections developed with area business leaders. This month at the 2nd Annual Waconia Works Signing Day we celebrated 4 students and the companies that provided work and education opportunities in the fields of Manufacturing and Trades. Also, earlier this week, we awarded \$3,000 in scholarships to three Waconia High School students.

Congratulations to Hailey Bigaouette, Andrew Schwob, and Jake Schramm. Funding for these scholarships was generated from our Career Exploration Fair & Community Expo held this past spring. We're grateful for the community partnerships, and wish the graduates all the best!

State Advocacy - In other recent state advocacy news, I'm appreciative and proud of the work from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. Through the Waconia Chamber's involvement with the Federation Partners, an arm of the MN Chamber, we were able to advocate for the replenishment of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund without raising taxes. This prevented a double-digit tax increase on every Minnesota employer business to replenish the \$2.7 billion payroll tax fund. To put that into perspective, a mid-sized consulting firm indicated a \$27,400 savings.

During the pandemic, closures happened and businesses did what they were told to do by sending workers home. The State borrowed money from the federal government to cover the costs of unemployment. Over 30 other states repaid their debt right away, while Minnesota was accruing \$50,000 a day in interest by delaying action. On April 30, the legislature was able to strike a deal which included 3 parts: Unemployment Insurance Fund fully funded by \$2.7 billion, \$500 million in frontline worker pay, and \$190 million for COVID-19-related needs at Governor Walz's discretion. Again, we're extremely appreciative of the work of the MN Chamber and want to thank our legislators, Senator Julia Coleman and Representative Jim Nash for their support.

In other 2022 session news, a few supplemental spending bills passed: \$83 million in Agriculture/Broadband, \$75 million for Veterans, and \$93 million in Mental Health. Last, the 'Free the Growler' bill was signed into law, allowing Minnesota breweries and distilleries expanded off-sale options. Thanks to Representative Nash for his long-term work in fighting for this bill. As the school year and session closes, take some time to relax this weekend and enjoy a locally-crafted beverage!

Cheers,

Christine