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By Steve Jagler

## Wisconsin's business community is a house divided

The controversy over Gov. Jim Doyle's proposed Clean Energy Jobs Act illustrates a deep philosophical divide that is emerging within Wisconsin's business community.

In some ways, the emerging chasm pits the politics of tomorrow against the politics of yesterday.

On one side of the divide – in favor of the green jobs plan - stand the coalition for Clean, Responsible Energy for Wisconsin's Economy (CREWE) and the Wisconsin Business Council.

The CREWE includes venerable companies such as CleanPower, Alliant Energy, EcoEnergy, Johnson Controls Inc., Xcel Energy, C5•6 Technologies, Axley Brynelson, Madison Gas and Electric, Orion Energy Systems, Forest County Potawatomi Community, Wisconsin Energy Corp., Poblocki Sign Company, Emerging Energies of Wisconsin, MillerCoors, American Transmission Co., WPPI Energy, DTE Energy Services and Kranz, Inc.

"CREWE strongly supports (Doyle's) Global Warming Task Force recommendations and will support legislation that preserves the careful policy balance reached by the task force. We are currently reviewing the draft bill," the CREWE companies said in a joint statement. "We appreciate the strong leadership of the sponsors and thank them for hard work in preparing the draft. We look forward to working with them in the coming weeks and months to pass and implement legislation that will address climate change, increase energy independence, and create new, clean energy jobs for Wisconsin."

The plan also has the support of the Wisconsin Business Council, which includes leaders from several of the state's key businesses, including American Transmission Co., Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, AT&T Wisconsin, Commerce State Bank, Dean Health System, Midwest Natural Gas, MillerCoors, Mortenson Construction, Orion Energy Systems and Park Bank (in Madison).

"Achieving the vision set forth in the Clean Energy Jobs Act will require diligence and innovative thinking," said Scott VanderSanden, chairman of the Wisconsin Business Council and president of AT&T Wisconsin. "But we are confident that Wisconsin leaders in manufacturing, energy production, trade and service industries are up to this challenge. We look forward to the public discussion and the give and take that will be part of the legislative effort to fine-tune this proposal. The Clean Energy Jobs Act sets the stage for the creation of thousands of well-paying, family-sustaining 'green jobs' over the next decade, and if implemented in a way that recognizes the needs of our key industries, it will enhance Wisconsin's business climate."

The nonpartisan Wisconsin Business Council, which was formed last June, includes both conservative- and liberal-leaning people who believe that "better jobs and a stronger economy are critical to Wisconsin's quality of life."

Phil Prange, president and chief executive officer of the Wisconsin Business Council, held several key positions in the former Wisconsin Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson's administration.

"The Wisconsin Business Council was established to provide a forum for business leaders to come together in the search for mutually beneficial solutions, and we're cautiously optimistic about the potential of the Clean Energy Jobs Act," Prange said. "A flourishing private sector is critical to our quality of life and it is clear that environmental innovation also makes sense from a competitive standpoint."

On the other side of the divide stands the Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), which is joined by 22 other business organizations, including the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC), in opposition to Doyle's proposal.

The WMC cited a study by the conservative Wisconsin Policy Research Institute that contends the proposed green legislation would kill 43,093 private-sector jobs in Wisconsin.

"Many families in this state are hurting," said Scott Manley, director of environmental policy for the WMC, which has long supported conservative political candidates and causes. "We cannot afford to lose any more jobs, but that is exactly what this legislation will do." Wisconsin has lost 160,000 high-wage manufacturing jobs since 2000, and the proposed legislation will continue the high-wage job loss. We need to reverse the current trend, and find a way to bring family-supporting manufacturing jobs back to our state. But hitting Wisconsin's economy with the expensive new energy regulations proposed today will significantly increase our cost of electricity, and kill jobs while doing nothing to address global warming. Lawmakers must understand that increasing the cost of energy for Wisconsin families and employers is a recipe for further job loss."

Adding even more intrigue to this philosophical divide among Wisconsin's business community is the fact that many members of the CREWE and the Wisconsin Business Council in favor of the green jobs plan also are dues-paying members of the WMC, the MMAC and the other organizations that are against the plan.

"It's really created massive fault lines within the business community between the deniers (of global warming) and those that think something must be done," said Thad Nation of the CREWE. "It's probably going to get messier before it gets better."

As for Doyle, he said an economic assessment of the Clean Energy Jobs Act (State Senate Bill 450 and State Assembly Bill 649) found that the package would directly create at least 15,000 green jobs in Wisconsin by 2025. More than 1,800 jobs would be created in the first year alone, he said. Doyle's assessment also found that between 800 and 1,800 construction jobs would be created each year from 2011-2025, and more than 2,000 manufacturing jobs would be created once the laws are fully implemented.

"Addressing climate change is not just an environmental issue, it's about creating green jobs," Doyle said. "The Clean Energy Jobs Act offers new standards to help accelerate Wisconsin's green economy. I am calling on the Legislature to update renewable portfolio standards to generate 25 percent of our fuel from renewable sources by 2025 and set a realistic goal of a 2 percent annual reduction in energy consumption by 2015."

What will really happen if the bill is approved? For now, I guess it depends upon whom you believe.

*Steve Jagler is executive editor of BizTimes Milwaukee.*

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