



## **TOURISM JOBS PROVIDE PATHWAY TO PROSPERITY**

Later this year ground will be broken for a new Marriott Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. When the new hotel opens it will employ between 175-200 full-time people.

What kind of career path can people in the hospitality industry expect to take? According to the Marriott's own website, "Keep your options open, be flexible about your first role within the industry, and be willing to learn new skills. By staying open to all opportunities to get your foot in the door, you'll gain experience in hospitality and will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how the business works."

In other words – the opportunities are limitless.

This is National Tourism Week, and since the topic of jobs has been front and center in virtually non-stop public discourse for months, we thought we'd drill the discussion down to a sector whose jobs are often marginalized as "seasonal and part-time and don't pay family supporting wages."

Governor Walker has made it his mission to add 250,000 private sector jobs to Wisconsin during the next four years. More than 24,000 of those jobs were lost in the tourism sector over the last two years thanks in large part to the recession. With effective and strategic marketing and a sustainable economic recovery, we are confident that we can get those jobs back and see this sector play an important role in contributing to new job growth.

Since about 38 percent of traveler spending takes place in the summer season, tourism offers job opportunities to students and workers entering the workforce with limited skills or experience, especially during this peak travel season. For pockets of the state with high unemployment, these jobs can serve as gateways to full-time employment and meaningful careers.

While large projects such as the Marriott make news, the majority of tourism jobs are directly tied to smaller, locally-owned businesses. These are the entrepreneurs who own and operate restaurants, hotels, attractions, arts and cultural venues and retail establishments.

According to data from the Department of Workforce Development, 15,000 businesses with less than 50 employees are currently employing over 165,000 of the more than 260,000 Wisconsin residents who rely on jobs in the tourism industry.

Take Door County for example. The county's tourism industry, which is ranked seventh in the state for total traveler spending, is solely supported by small business owners. More than 1,200 tourism establishments in Door County have less than 19 employees.

Small businesses are the backbone of our state and hold the key to job creation. Governor Walker understands the role tourism can play in adding jobs and improving the image of the state. That is why the Governor has proposed a two-year stepped up increase in the Department of Tourism's promotional budget, bringing it from its current \$9.9 million closer to the industry's target of \$15 million.

More travelers to the state result in additional jobs as the hospitality industry has the ability to quickly ramp up. Traveler spending in Wisconsin generates nearly \$1.4 billion in state revenues and another \$662 million for local governments. More visitors will mean greater tax revenues to pay for schools,

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health care and other essential services. According to a study conducted by the research firm Longwoods International, for every dollar Wisconsin invests in marketing, the state gets back \$7 in tax benefits.

As we head into the busy summer season, we acknowledge the army of almost 300,000 goodwill ambassadors who are gainfully employed in Wisconsin's hospitality industry. These are the entrepreneurs that are passionate about our State and roll out the welcome mat to the millions of visitors who make the choice to spend their traveler dollars in Wisconsin. Their work every day makes Wisconsin a great place to live, work, play and visit.

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