

Biden's Economic Boom is Strong for Wisconsin

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Sen. Jeff Smith writes about the significant steps we've made to boost our economy and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic since President Biden was sworn in.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - Nothing comes easy. I'm sure you've heard that before from a parent or teacher when you encountered unexpected obstacles while trying to get something done. I have to remind myself of that with almost every project I take on. Patience and persistence can become your greatest asset when facing challenges like these.

It's no different in the world of politics. When important issues need to be addressed, you'll always run into different sets of challenges. But once a project is complete or new policy is adopted we quickly forget how hard it was to get there. It's so easy to take for granted something that didn't even exist just a short time ago. With that in mind it's necessary to reflect on the good things that we've recently accomplished as we consider the challenges in front of us.

If you're following the news, you know a lot of focus has been on the fact that Congress can't seem to agree on voting rights, the filibuster rules and issues, like accessible child care and

college affordability. But let's remember all that's been accomplished since the beginning of 2021.

Faced with a spiraling economy brought on by a pandemic, the Biden Administration needed to make big things happen. Not the least of which was to improve access to COVID-19 vaccinations as quickly as possible. Despite divisive political rhetoric and some initial reluctance, more than 200 million shots were given in 2021.

When you consider where we were a year ago following the shocking attack on our nation's capital, who would have thought President Biden would have been able to move us forward at all? It seemed unthinkable at the time that he would pass the largest American investment package or the largest infrastructure bill in history—but he did.

At the beginning of the pandemic the national unemployment rate was at 15% but by getting over 6 million Americans back to work, it's now below 4%. In Wisconsin, it's even better. Thanks to Governor Evers' leadership, we're at a record-low 2.8% unemployment rate.

Last week, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau released projections indicating the state general fund balance will have a \$3.8 billion surplus at the end of the 2021-23 biennium; this is nearly \$2.9 billion more than we expected in June 2021. Governor Evers announced his plan to invest this surplus to provide a \$150 refund to every Wisconsin resident, provide \$131.8 million in targeted tax relief to caregivers and families and invest almost \$750 million in our schools.



Despite elevated inflation, Americans' incomes were higher in 2021 than they were in 2019 and 2020. In addition, in just one year our country has made real progress in cutting the unacceptably high rate of child poverty in America by 40%. We are building critical infrastructure for our children today and for future generations of Americans.

Although there are still many challenges we must still address, we've made significant steps thus far to boost our economy. This "Biden Boom" has been particularly strong for American workers, who have access to better-paying jobs and are seeing their wages grow. It makes me

excited to see what the next three years bring after what we've seen in just the first year.

Governor Evers has faced obstructionist politics in Wisconsin, but he has been able to show real progress with genuine leadership, patience and persistence from his office. While Republicans fiddle with unreasonable and politically-motivated bills, Governor Evers continues to conduct a full orchestra of policy to keep Wisconsin moving. It's not a fluke that we have record low unemployment and historic budget surplus projections.

It's easy to dwell on the headlines, but don't let them bury the success stories happening around us. There will always be politicians who choose to spend their time chasing unicorns. In the meantime, true public servants are making sure we come out of this pandemic stronger than ever.

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