http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/walker-open-for-business-s5.jpg

NE WI Senator Dave Hansen teams with SE WI Republican to introduce legislation that would make it a crime to commit fraud in pursuit of taxpayer economic development assistance from WEDC.

MADISON - State Senator **Dave Hansen** (D-Green Bay) and State Representative **Samantha Kerkman**
(R-Salem) announced plans Friday to introduce bi-partisan legislation that would make it a crime to commit fraud in pursuit of taxpayer economic development assistance from WEDC.

“Just as there are criminal penalties for fraud of Wisconsin Works, Medical Assistance, public assistance, and for food stamps, this legislation would make it a crime for committing fraud in the pursuit of state economic development assistance from WEDC,” **said Rep. Kerkman**.

The legislation, which passed the State Assembly and had the support of Governor Walker last session, would make committing fraud against WEDC or using a benefit from WEDC in a manner other than its specific use a Class E felony which could result in those convicted being imprisoned up to 15 years and/or fined up to $50,000. Those who intentionally defraud WEDC will be ineligible for economic development benefits for 7 years. The bill also authorizes WEDC to bring a civil action to recover damages for fraudulently obtained economic development benefits

“This type of fraud can cost taxpayers millions with the stroke of a pen,” **said Senator Hansen**. “State taxpayers should be confident that both their tax dollars and their interests are being protected and that economic development assistance fraudsters face stiff penalties for their actions."

The bills are being circulated for co-sponsors in the Assembly and Senate. A request for co-sponsors is a way to determine early support for legislation and the first step toward the bills being formally introduced.

****

Legislative writer Jay Wadd contributed this story.