



Wisconsin Technology Council

The Future of Research in Wisconsin

Wisconsin should focus on legislation that encourages high-tech research and start-ups, and should not create restrictions on research that place the state at a competitive disadvantage. The Wisconsin Technology Council's recommendation is driven by these factors:

1. The intended objectives of research restrictions at the state level will not be accomplished. Academic researchers who have established an international reputation for their work are driven by a passionate belief that their work will benefit humanity. Many competing institutions are attempting to recruit researchers. If Wisconsin adopts legislation that restricts research, these researchers would likely relocate to an institution in a state or country where no such limitations exist. There will be no net impact on the area of research; it simply will no longer be done in Wisconsin. The adoption of legislation that restricts research will effectively be only symbolic with negative economic and intellectual consequences for the state of Wisconsin and its citizens.
2. Technology research in Wisconsin is not conducted in a vacuum. It is performed under the surveillance of ethical and scientific oversight organizations. As an example, human embryonic stem cell research at UW-Madison is performed with the oversight of Hospital Internal Review Boards and the University Bioethics Committee, among other review boards. Similar situations exist in other tech-based disciplines such as nanotechnology.
3. The unintended consequences of a unilateral Wisconsin restriction on research would likely be devastating to Wisconsin's efforts to build a high-tech economy. Adoption of research restrictions will send a signal that Wisconsin has a hostile regulatory environment for tech-based research. Wisconsin academic institutions and private companies would face new challenges in attracting world-class researchers who might be concerned that their research will be targeted next. Technology advancement in Wisconsin could become non-existent.
4. Companies and investors will view Wisconsin as having a burdensome regulatory climate and as being a risky place to conduct business. In the process of establishing ineffective regulations, we will undermine one of our greatest strengths, while driving out businesses, including firms that would not have likely been a part of an ethical debate.

The Tech Council encourages support for research and development of high technology in Wisconsin. We also encourage the citizens of Wisconsin to keep informed about the complex issues we face and to listen to the diverse viewpoints on their implications. We believe it is important for the citizens of Wisconsin to weigh in on these issues with their political leaders. We encourage our citizens to pursue adoption of policies that are consistent with their beliefs by expressing their views to our congressional leaders, where the desired results may be achieved. However, we also encourage our citizens to ask our State of Wisconsin policy makers to refrain from establishing constraints on research that are restrictive because of the ineffectiveness of such guidelines in achieving the primary objective and the devastating ancillary consequences.

*Reaffirmed by the Wisconsin Technology Council Board of Directors
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