

WISCONSIN INCENTIVIZES “CLOSING CREDITS” BY OPENING NEW TAX CREDITS FOR FILMMAKERS

A significant development to Wisconsin’s economic and cultural policy is now underway, as Governor Tony Evers announced on February 17, 2026, the launch of the state’s new film production tax credit program and the establishment of a dedicated state film office. As part of the 2025-27 biennial budget, the state authorized up to \$5 million in annual tax credits designed to incentivize film, television, documentary, and related production activity within Wisconsin. The program, administered by Film Wisconsin under the Department of Tourism, marks Wisconsin’s return to offering competitive production incentives after a fifteen-year period in which the state has gone without a comprehensive tax-incentive program for media production, aligning the state more closely with regional peers, such as Illinois and Minnesota, that actively court creative industry investment by offering related tax credits.

Eligible projects must meet defined minimum spending thresholds to qualify for the tax credit—typically \$100,000 for productions of 30 minutes or longer and \$50,000 for shorter works. Eligible costs for the credit include in-state wages for cast and crew, accommodations and lodging, set construction and operations, rental or purchase of equipment and facilities, location fees, and other production-related goods and services. Credits are capped at \$1 million per project annually, and Film Wisconsin will review applications monthly, providing a structured and transparent process for applicants. The credit is retroactive to qualifying expenditures beginning January 1, 2026, meaning that early-year investments may still be eligible for relief.

The film tax credit reflects a targeted economic development approach that leverages tax incentives to stimulate job creation, local hiring, and spending in Wisconsin’s service and supplier ecosystem. By formalizing eligibility criteria, administrative oversight, and annual caps, the program seeks to balance fiscal stewardship with industry competitiveness. For production stakeholders, understanding the compliance requirements is essential for maximizing the benefits of the program. As the initiative unfolds in 2026 and beyond, the film tax credit could become a cornerstone of Wisconsin’s broader strategy to enhance its creative economy and attract an expanded slate of production activity.

The legal implications extend beyond eligibility analysis. Structuring considerations may include entity formation, allocation of credits in pass-through entities, transferability mechanics, and coordination with other state or federal incentives. Additionally, the program may require contractual provisions addressing credit risk allocation, clawback exposure, audit rights, and representations concerning local hiring and spending thresholds, all of which should be evaluated by counsel. As rulemaking and administrative guidance evolve, ongoing

monitoring will be essential to ensure the available incentives are maximized while maintaining full statutory and regulatory compliance.

CHAMBERS AND PARTNERS RECOGNIZES FAUST AND O'NEIL CANNON FOR M&A EXCELLENCE

We're proud to announce that Attorney Pete Faust and O'Neil Cannon's mergers and acquisitions team have been recognized by *Chambers and Partners* as among the top in Wisconsin for M&A and general corporate law.

O'Neil Cannon is one of only seven Wisconsin firms ranked by *Chambers and Partners* in this category. Faust, the firm's president and managing shareholder, is one of just 23 Wisconsin attorneys to earn individual recognition for excellence in M&A.

In addition to Faust, O'Neil Cannon's mergers and acquisitions team includes Dino Antonopoulos, JB Koenings, Britany Morrison, Chad Richter, Jason Scoby, James DeJong, Brady Dettmann, Cate Heerey, Michael Kennedy, Jason Meehan, Samuel Nelson, and Nancy Wilson.

Chambers and Partners, a London-based research firm, evaluates law firms and attorneys across 185 countries. Each year, more than 200 researchers conduct thousands of interviews with lawyers and clients to identify and rank the leading professionals in the legal field.

ATTORNEY BRADY DETTMANN HAS JOINED O'NEIL CANNON

Attorney Brady Dettmann graduate of Marquette University Law School, has joined O'Neil Cannon's Business Law Practice Group.

Dettmann has experience in mergers and acquisitions, corporate and partnership taxation, non-profit organizations, and general corporate matters. While in law school, Dettmann worked as a judicial intern for Justice Hagedorn of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Dettmann also worked as a legal intern for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Council.

Hamilton's experience extends to clients across various industries, ranging from mergers and

acquisitions and business corporate transactions to intellectual property matters, including licensing agreements, sports/esports affairs, and content creation. During law school, Hamilton held legal internships focused on esports transactional practices and served as a mediator through the Marquette Mediation Clinic.

We are pleased to welcome Dettmann and Hamilton to the firm.

O'Neil Cannon, founded in Milwaukee in 1973, is a full-service law firm that focuses on meeting the many needs of businesses and their owners. Our experienced attorneys work with businesses and their owners at all stages of the business life cycle, helping them start, grow, and transition their businesses. We also assist business owners with their personal legal needs, including tax and estate planning and family law. For more information about the services we provide, please visit our [website](#).