



Date:

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Time:

3:20pm - 3:45pm

Presenter:

"Milwaukee as the 'Silicon Valley' of Water Technology? Myth and Reality"

Marc V. Levine

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During the past two years, Milwaukee's civic leadership has coalesced behind a regional economic development strategy to "brand itself as the global capital of freshwater research" -- the "Silicon Valley of water technology," as more than one booster has put it.

But the economic development case for Milwaukee as a global hub of water technology is based on spurious claims and, to borrow a phrase, "irrational exuberance." The key points: 1) Measured by the location of water company headquarters, plants, or offices; the generation of water technology patents; or jobs in the industry, there is little evidence that Milwaukee is a "hub" or even an "emerging hub" of the industry; 2) The job creation potential of water technology in Milwaukee has been vastly exaggerated by boosters; in fact, the two leading companies of the local water lobby have created more jobs outside of Milwaukee than in it over the past decade; 3) A School of Freshwater Science (SFS) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, while a welcome development in the advancement of science, will be neither a unique presence nor a "first-mover" in the field of water technology already brimming with university and corporate research facilities, and therefore of limited local economic development importance; and 4) As evidenced by the politics of locating a building for the SFS, the risks of excessive industry influence over the new school are significant, threatening to undermine the scientific mission of the school with commercial values.

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Presenter Biography

Marc V. Levine

Marc V. Levine is Professor of History, Economic Development, and Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a Senior Fellow at the University's Center for Economic Development, where he served as founding director from 1990-2007. He currently directs UWM's Center for Canadian-American Policy Studies and the UWM Consortium for Economic Opportunity, and is Visiting Professor at the Université du Québec. Dr. Levine is the author or co-author of four books, and numerous scholarly articles and newspaper op-ed pieces, on topics such as urban redevelopment, regional labor markets, language policy, income inequality, and tourism as an economic development strategy. He is currently completing a book entitled: *The March of Folly: Fads and Foolishness in Economic Development*, and his most recent policy studies include *The False Promise of the Entrepreneurial University: Selling Academic Commercialism in Milwaukee* (2009), and *The Crisis of Black Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations and Policy Options* (2007). Levine has received numerous grants and awards, including a Mellon Foundation Congressional Fellowship (where he served as economic policy adviser to Senator Edward Kennedy), the UWM award for Distinguished Faculty Public Service, and over \$3 million in grants and contracts to support economic development research at UWM. Dr. Levine is also an award-winning scholar of Canadian politics and society: the *International Journal of Canadian Studies* recently selected his book, *The Reconquest of Montreal*, as one of the 30 most important recent books written on Canada. In recognition of Levine's influential research and writing on language policy, the Government of Quebec named him in 2005 a member of the *Ordre des francophones d'Amérique*. Levine received his B.A., M.A. and PhD. degrees in History from the University of Pennsylvania.