



LOCAL UNION 4974

P.O. BOX 414

ISHPEMING, MI. 49849

WEB SITE: WWW.LOCAL4974.ORG

E-MAIL: LOCAL4974@AOL.COM

JIM JARVI

PRESIDENT

PAUL AHO

JOHNSON

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

ANN BEAUCHAINE

TREASURER

TONY LAKENEN

VICE-PRESIDENT

WAYNE

RECORDING SECRETARY

PHONE: TILDEN MINE OFFICE 906-475-3524 ISHPEMING OFFICE 906-486-6929 FAX: 906-486-4091

Union Membership Update

February 21, 2011

Please read the attached news articles regarding anti-union, anti-working class, anti-lower class, anti-retiree, anti-education legislation being pushed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder (R), Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker (R) and the

republican controlled legislatures in each state.

“Some men see things as they are and say, why. I dream of things that never were and say, why not.” RFK

Gov. Rick Snyder's overhaul of Michigan's budget is ambitious, but controversial

1:57 AM, Feb. 18, 2011 |

 421Comments



Protesters gather outside the State Capitol as Gov. Rick Snyder addresses the State Senate on his proposed budget in the Senate Hearing Room of the Boji Tower in Lansing, Mich., on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011.



By CHRIS CHRISTOFF

Detroit Free Press Lansing Bureau Chief

LANSING -- An impassioned Gov. Rick Snyder delivered a politically radical prescription Thursday to heal Michigan's struggling economy: a big dose of short-term pain to get what he said would be long-term gain.

Retirees, low-income workers and upper-middle and above earners would lose income tax exemptions and credits under the budget plan he presented to the Legislature. Michigan's movie industry would have to make do without big incentives. Schools, universities, cities and state departments would have to make do with less. And state employees would pay much more for health care.

Unlike past budgets that ignored debt and future deficits, Snyder's plan confronted the issues directly -- a choice politicians often avoid.

"This is more than a budget proposal," he said, "this is an opportunity to stop living in the past and start looking to the future. This is a defining moment."

Seven weeks into his new job, Snyder -- who had sky-high approval ratings in polls a month ago -- suddenly faces sharp criticism from people who called his proposals unfair and even cruel.

"This budget, in effect, declares war on senior citizens," especially by taxing pensions, said Eric Schneidewind, president of AARP Michigan. "We get higher taxes and worse services."

But state Rep. Chuck Moss, R-Birmingham, called Snyder's budget plan visionary.

"There's something in that for everybody not to like," said Moss, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "The point is everybody's going to have to pitch in to get Michigan moving."

Snyder takes a swing at big changes for Michigan with radical budget plan

Gov. Rick Snyder personally delivered his budget plan to members of the Legislature, and he stuck faithfully to a theme he hopes will take root, as his plan moves through Lansing's political meat grinder: Taxes and spending must be simple, fair and efficient.

"This is about growing Michigan's economy, it's about creating an environment where businesses can create jobs," Snyder told reporters.

But a counter-theme was boiling inside and out of the Senate Hearing Room, where Snyder unveiled the most far-reaching and deep-cutting budget and tax plan of modern times.

"Unfortunately, there's nothing new about balancing the budget on the backs of seniors and hardworking families who are struggling to make ends meet so we can give tax breaks to large corporations," said Rep. Vicki Barnett, D-Farmington Hills.

Perhaps most controversial is Snyder's plan to eliminate state income tax exemptions for pensions and other retirement income, and to reduce the Homestead Property Tax Credit for senior homeowners, long considered a political nonstarter.

He was warned that some cities would face bankruptcy if they absorb his proposed cuts to revenue sharing.

And so Snyder's intricately knitted economic plan must withstand an onslaught by interest groups whose members would lose.

Lansing political consultant Craig Ruff said Snyder's plan appears to finally tackle embedded deficits that have plagued the state for years. But he said it will be attacked furiously.

"The Legislature will respect the office of governor for putting forth a budget that's truly in the black, but there will be yelps from everyone whose ox is gored," Ruff said. "Those are strong constituencies and they have loud voices in the Capitol."

Snyder's plan for the state closely reflects the 10,500 Michiganders who expressed their views in forums around Michigan, said Phil Power, founder and president of the Center for Michigan, which sponsored the events.

"People wanted a simpler, more durable tax system, and one that encouraged businesses, jobs and entrepreneurship," Power said. "They wanted a fair tax system. They were also very skeptical about tax incentives."

Snyder proposes eliminating virtually all tax incentives for businesses, except those that already have been promised. Future incentives would be granted through the budget process, not as tax breaks.

Sen. Roger Kahn, R-Saginaw, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the budget plan has plenty of attackers, but much in its favor. Kahn has said he'd support the tax on pensions.

He also said he supports Snyder's proposal to eliminate the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a change that would save the state an estimated \$360 million next year.

Supporters of the EITC say it keeps thousands of working families from falling into welfare, and that it serves as an economic stimulus for those who need help the most.

"Our definition of shared sacrifice is not cutting taxes for big businesses and making students, seniors and the working poor pay for it," said Frank Houston, spokesman for A Better Michigan Future, a coalition of 40 labor, education, environmental and other groups.

Houston said if the administration wants to tax pensions, it might at least consider exempting those with small pensions. Michigan totally exempts public pensions -- those for teachers, police and government employees and elected officials -- from the 4.35% income tax.

Private pensions and other retirement income are exempt up to \$41,200 for individuals and \$90,240 for joint filers.

Leon Drolet, executive director of the conservative Michigan Taxpayers Alliance, said Snyder's budget plan is responsible and attractive, but politically impossible because of the pension taxes.

"It's irresponsible to proposed a budget that has no chance of passage," he said.

The resistance probably won't derail Snyder's overall budget plan, said Bill Ballenger, publisher of Inside Michigan Politics.

"I'm not as pessimistic as others are who say it's a nonstarter, and that the Legislature can't stand up to the interest groups," Ballenger said. "If he gets 80% of what he wants, that would be a leap forward."

Snyder, who made millions of dollars as a business executive and entrepreneur, said he will work for a \$1 salary as governor. The job pays \$159,300.

About MR

Calling All Workers and Retirees

by Gregg Shotwell

Workers, retirees, unionists, and activists of all stripes and sizes are responding to calls to protest at state capitals in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and elsewhere.

In Michigan, where I live, Governor Snyder wants to raise taxes on workers, poor people, and retirees so he can give businesses a tax break of 1.8 billion dollars.

This is the Republican version of welfare. Tax the poor and give to the prosperous. Or, from each according to his humility (poor, retired, working), to each according to his greed.

Such a transfer of wealth from one group to another would be labeled class warfare by Republican pundits, but since this shift is from the less affluent to the most affluent, it's deemed justice -- wise and benign governance. In their book, only corporations and wealthy investors deserve government support. As my brother, Steve Shotwell, said, in regard to the conservative minds of our times, "Corporations have all the rights and privileges of individuals, but individuals don't have the right to organize."

When individuals organize to support their rights and bargain collectively, Republicans call it communism, socialism, or fascism because they don't know the difference and clarity is not their selling point.

But when corporations organize to promote their interests, and screw the rest, they call it the American Way. Apparently, in their eyes, the American Way is the Corporate State.

Snyder claims tax cuts for business will create jobs. But since consumers will be paying more in taxes and making less at work, or getting less from their pensions, they won't have as much to spend with businesses in Michigan.

Businesses won't hire until there is more demand. Snyder is killing demand with his tax-and-subsidize-business plan. Besides, we've seen how many jobs Bush's tax cuts created. The only job category that expanded under the Bush tax cut plan was debt collectors and repo-men.

But that's not all. Diane Feeley reports:

There are **a series of Emergency Financial Manager bills** coming up in the State House (**HB 4214-18**) that would give the State Treasurer general powers to take over villages, townships, cities, counties and school districts that are considered

"financially distressed." (75 people have already been trained as Emergency Financial Managers and 100 more in the pipeline.) This bill package would allow the EFMs to break union contracts.

Already four Michigan cities -- Benton Harbor, Pontiac, Ecore, and Highland Park -- have EFMs, plus the Detroit public school system. But this piece of legislation EXPANDS what an EFM can do: not just negotiate union contracts, but *terminate* them.

You can see where this strategy this leads. All working people will be impounded into servility.

No one likes to pay higher taxes. But I would not object to higher taxes *if* the extra revenue went to support schools and public service workers like police, firefighters, teachers, social workers, sanitation, street repair, and so on.

Anything paid to workers comes right back to the community because workers spend their money in the local economy.

Handouts to businesses in the form of tax cuts does not stimulate demand. We have seen too many companies accept tax abatements and then not fulfill their promise to create jobs. Instead, they pocket the tax break and relocate to Mexico or China or a PO Box in Bermuda.

Business adds jobs when demand goes up, not when taxes go down.

If a business decides to relocate or start up in Michigan solely because of cheap taxes, the business plan isn't viable in the first place. We want to attract businesses which approve of our education system, our infrastructure, our clean aspiring cities, competent medical care, low crime rate, and high capacity for inclusiveness, consensus, and expansion. These are attractions that require investment in our citizens and in public service.

We don't want businesses that are attracted by our Third World living standards.

The Republicans want to roll back workers' rights and benefits to Depression Era standards. I am not willing to pave the road to poverty for my grandchildren with mouthwatering concessions to multimillionaires like Limbaugh, Palin, Beck, and blah-greedy-blah-greedy-blah.

But don't mistake my Republican bashing for support for tail-wagging Democrats and their union lackeys who want to preserve Collective Begging for old times' sake. Collective Begging and Democratic Penance will not save workers from making all the sacrifices and paying for all the crimes and extravagances of the investor class.

The Democrats are eager to please their corporate financiers. And union leaders have never shown a willingness to confront the gorging elephant in the middle of the US budget -- the Pentagon.

Stop funding war and the Debt Monster will fall faster than a propped-up military regime when it runs out of bullets.

We know damn well where all the money went -- into the pockets of war racketeers, contractors, and mercenaries. Bring our soldiers home. We need them to protect US citizens from the enemies inside the gates of our State Capitals.

Union battle echoes beyond Wisconsin: **'We're fighting for our very existence'**

Other states are watching Wisconsin's bid to virtually break labor unions as a means of cutting huge deficits. Unions in Wisconsin and beyond see this as a Waterloo moment.



Protesters of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's bill to eliminate collective bargaining rights for many state workers pack the rotunda at the State Capitol in Madison, Wis., Thursday.

Andy Manis/AP

By [Mark Guarino](#), Staff writer / February 17, 2011

Chicago

About 40,000 public-sector employees crammed into the Wisconsin state Capitol and surrounding blocks in Madison Thursday, hoping to sway three Republican state senators to block a bill they say is designed to wipe out 50 years of union labor laws in the state.

“We’re fighting for our very existence,” says Mike Lipp, president of Madison Teachers Incorporated, representing 2,500 public school teachers in the city.

The political drama was set in motion Monday when Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (R) [proposed a bill](#) that he says is necessary shore up the state deficit. The bill would force workers in non-law-enforcement unions to pay more for their pension and health benefits, remove their collective-bargaining power on anything but wages, force members to vote every 12 months to certify their union’s existence, and bar them from deducting union dues from state paychecks.

Governor Walker says the measures would save the state nearly \$30 million through the end of June and nearly \$300 million during the next two fiscal years. The state faces a projected \$3.6 billion gap during the next two years, and other states such as Ohio and Tennessee, which are in similar fiscal situations and are considering similar bills, are tracking Wisconsin to see how the controversy plays out.

“There is no question that the big-business elites in this country and the political right wing together see the recession in general – and state and local fiscal crises in particular – as an opportunity to advance their agenda,” says Anders Lindall, a spokesman for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 31 in Illinois.

Desperation in Madison

By Tuesday, the Madison hill was swamped with thousands of protesters, who attended a 17-hour public hearing. Since then, union supporters from Wisconsin and from surrounding states have grown in numbers. Schools were shut down for third straight day in Madison, and even President Obama has weighed in on the matter, telling a Milwaukee television station he felt unions were under an “assault.”

“I think it’s very important for us to understand that public employees, they’re our neighbors, they’re our friends,” he said.

Preventing the bill’s passage are Senate Democrats who have fled the state to prevent a quorum. The 33-member state Senate needs 20 members present for the passage of a fiscal bill, making the chamber’s 19 Republicans not enough for a vote.

'Unions won't go away'

But if the bill is eventually passed, what then for unions? “Public working environments are likely to become more tense than they ever have been” in past decades, says Dennis Dresang, a political scientist at the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Strikes, campaigns to sack senators who supported the bill, and “sick-ins” from work are likely to resurface.

“Unions won’t go away, I think that’s for sure. [Walker’s bill] is likely going to really get them more energized than they have in decades,” Mr. Dresang says.

Republican leaders in Wisconsin have suggested that the November election results have handed them a mandate to dramatically alter their state’s fiscal behavior.

“It’s going to be a challenge for the unions,” says Jim Sullivan, a labor lawyer who represents employers and school districts in Philadelphia and Wilmington, Del. “If they don’t see this as a wakeup call and have some responsible leadership that allows for changes in some of the contracts, they’re going to end up stripped of their bargaining rights.”

Public-sector employees compensated more?

One of the arguments Walker has made is that public-sector workers are compensated at a higher rate than those in the private sector. But according to the Economic Policy Institute, a nonprofit think tank in Washington, Wisconsin’s public sector workers get compensations that are 4.8 percent less than those for their counterparts in the private sector.

Dresang argues that the structure of how public workers are paid also saves the state money. He says that 26.7 percent of public-worker compensation is in benefits, compared with 11 to 17 percent for private workers. Because more public-worker compensation is in benefits, the state government is able to purchase health-care and pension packages in bulk, “which actually costs taxpayers less,” he says.

Union supporters say these considerations are not being discussed because Wisconsin’s Republican leadership has rushed to pass the bill in less than a week.

“It’s not an economic issue, we’re willing to pay our fair share,” says Mr. Lipp of the Madison union. “We realize everybody needs to help the issue.”

He adds that making police, fire, and state trooper unions exempt from the bill reflects the governor’s political agenda. “He’s afraid of those people,” he says.

Wisconsin protests: why 'week of rage' matters to rest of America

Wisconsin protests at the state Capitol pit a new wave of tea party-inspired Republicans against Democrats defending their most cherished ideals. It's a political drama that echoes across the country and could play out again across the newly 'red' Midwest.



A state Assembly Democrat at the Capitol in Madison, Wis., pumps his fist Friday as participants in the Wisconsin protests rally against Republican Gov. Scott Walker's bill to severely curtail the rights of state labor unions.

Darren Hauck/Reuters

By [Patrik Jonsson](#), Staff writer / February 18, 2011

- [The Wisconsin protests](#) are providing one of the first signs that the Midwest could become the primary testing ground for November's tea party revolution.

Plans by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (R) and the legislature to [gut collective bargaining](#) – the tool by which public unions secure pay and benefits – for most public employees could spill into other Midwest states as a wave of small-government conservatives elected last year take on some of Democrats' most cherished ideals.

No region of the country was more comprehensively recast by the 2010 elections than the seven states of the upper Midwest that arc from Minnesota to Ohio. Where before Democrats had held the upper hand, Republicans now have a virtual stranglehold on

politics, controlling both houses of the legislature and the governors' chairs in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The full import of that switch has become apparent on the streets of Madison, Wis., this week. At least 25,000 union Wisconsin protesters amassed Friday morning in and around the Capitol to protest the governor's plans. Earlier in the week, there had been as many as 40,000. Schools have been canceled, and one rally lasted a marathon 17 hours.

With the state's tea party activists set to counterprotest Saturday, the drama has set the scene for the streets of Madison to become a surrogate for the clash of broader forces that currently define American politics.

[House Speaker John Boehner \(R\) has backed Governor Walker](#) even as President Obama denounced the Wisconsin bill as an "assault on unions." The AFL-CIO, the country's largest union, vowed a national protest to support Wisconsin public employees.

One political scientist has gone so far as to compare the Wisconsin protests with what transpired in Cairo earlier this month.

Yet for the Midwest, the protests hint at a conflict that could extend well beyond this weekend and beyond Wisconsin. With state legislatures redrawing congressional and legislative district maps this year, Midwest Republicans have an opportunity to change the political landscape for years to come.

"The elections this past November brought to the fore a lot of small-bore conservatives ... under a very bad economic environment," says Robert Bruno, a labor movement expert at the University of Illinois in Champaign. That "presented a perfect opportunity to attack institutions [like unions] that will push for more Great Society programs – that government should be taking care of the poor, regulating the economy, and helping people who are unemployed."

Midwest turns red

In all, Republicans now hold five of seven governorships in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Last year, they held two.

The story is the same for legislatures in those seven states. Republicans now hold power in six of the seven lower chambers of the legislature (called the House in some states and the Assembly in others) – up from one last year. They also hold five of the seven state Senates. Only Illinois has bucked the trend, with Democrats controlling the General Assembly and the Senate and Democrat Pat Quinn the governor.

Walker was the first of the Midwest's four new Republican governors to push for weakening collective bargaining. But Ohio and Michigan already have bills targeting unions in the works, too.

Wisconsin Democrats have resorted to extreme measures to hold up the vote. Fourteen Democratic state senators decamped from Madison Thursday, making the statehouse one lawmaker short of a quorum. On Friday, Walker asked two state troopers to collect missing Democratic leader Mark Miller from his home in order to force a vote.

Rising tensions in Madison and could presage the kind of labor unrest that hasn't been seen in the US since the Great Depression, says Professor Bruno.

"If you're going to take away bargaining rights, you leave them with what?" he says. "You leave them with what they had in the '20s and '30s, you leave them with the streets."

Egypt in America?

In a time when large and tense demonstrations have become increasingly rare in America, the Wisconsin protests could provide an Egypt-like moment, says Norman Ornstein, a fellow at the nonpartisan American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

"If there's a big tea party demonstration in Madison, we may see a direct clash, just as we had in the streets of Cairo," he says.

One protester's sign at the capitol said, "Impeach Scott Mubarak" – a direct reference to protests that led Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to resign last week.

As it gains momentum, the union protest movement is likely to draw in young social-justice activists, Obama supporters, and even religious groups who fight for the dispossessed, says Bruno.

On the other hand, some conservatives believe Walker's refusal to budge on the collective bargaining issue has opened the way for counterprotests to support the cuts.

Conservative internet firebrand Andrew Breitbart and Atlanta radio show host Herman Cain will headline Saturday's tea party-flavored Wisconsin Freedom Rally. On his radio show Thursday, Fox News commentator Glenn Beck called the Wisconsin union protests "the beginning of the American insurrection."

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R) of Utah, who could face a tea party challenge to his seat in 2012, showed that mainstream Republicans, too, may be ready to weigh in.

In response to Mr. Obama's "assault" comment, Senator Hatch said: "The only assault is from a bunch of self-interested government union employees who are putting their interests ahead of the interests of the Wisconsin taxpayers, who have been funding their runaway spending. This is not the way public servants should behave."

No End in Sight for Wisconsin Budget Battle

A look at what your representatives—Rep. Dean Knudson, Sen. Sheila Harsdorf, Rep. Ron Kind, Sen. Ron Johnson and Sen. Herb Kohl—were up to last week.

On Friday, Feb. 11, 2011, Wisconsin [Gov. Scott Walker](#) released his [budget repair bill](#) to the [Wisconsin state legislature](#).

The bill aimed to address the immediate deficit of \$137 million for this fiscal year. The bill would also restructure the state's debt, saving [Wisconsin](#) approximately \$165 million this year.

Provisions of the bill include:

- Require state employees to pay around 5.8 percent of their pension
- Requires state employees to pay about 12 percent of their health care benefits
- Ties salary to the [Consumer Price Index](#), with wage increases based off inflation rates. If a greater wage increase is desired than what inflation calls for, a public referendum would need to be passed.
- Limiting collective bargaining for most public employees solely to wages. Unions would lose the right to negotiate on pensions, benefits or other aspects of the workers contract. [State Patrol officers](#), police officers and firefighters are exempt from these collective bargaining limitations.
- Union dues may no longer be collected by any school district, state or local governments. Furthermore, no state employee would be required to pay union dues.
- Contracts may not be for more than one year, and bargaining units must hold an annual vote to maintain their status as a union.
- Authorizes the [Department of Administration](#) to sell state heating plants, with the proceeds to be deposited in the state's budget stabilization fund.
- Make civil service appointments, such as legislative liaison, public information officer and chief legal counsel, into political appointments. This would allow Walker to fill positions currently held by employees from the Doyle administration with his own picks.

Walker has stated that the bill is necessary to "meet the immediate needs of our state and give government the tools to deal with this and future budget crises."

Opponents have stated that the bill is nothing more than an attack on unions, and an attempt to strip away workers' rights.

The [Wisconsin AFL-CIO](#) immediately released an [advertisement](#), urging citizens to contact their representative and encourage them to vote against the act, claiming the bill would take away any say teachers and employees have in the work place.

On Thursday, Feb. 17, the [Joint Finance Committee](#) passed an amended version of the bill in a 12-4 vote.

Later on in the afternoon, the [Senate Democrats](#) walked out of the session in protest of the bill. They then fled the state, in an attempt to derail the voting on the bill.

In order to vote for a bill in the Wisconsin Senate, at least 20 senators need be present. With all 14 Democrats leaving, the [Republicans](#) were short 1 from calling the bill to a vote.

State Patrol officers were sent to round up the Senate members and bring them to the floor for a vote, but could not locate any of them, leaving the bill in limbo.

The Democratic Senators have stated that they are all in undisclosed locations outside of [Wisconsin](#). They also stated that they will not return until Walker comes back to the table and discusses alternatives to the bill.

In response, Walker called for Democratic Senators to "come back to work."

While Walker had hoped the bill would have passed through the [Assembly](#) and Senate by Friday, neither branch has brought it to a vote.

As a result, on Saturday, Feb. 19, Walker announced his biennial budget address had been delayed until March 1. The address was originally scheduled for Feb. 22.

On Sunday, Feb. 20, Walker stated on [Fox News Sunday](#) that anywhere from 10,000-12,000 state workers could be laid off if the budget repair bill does not pass.

It is likely that the Assembly will be able to vote on it before the Senate, as no Democratic Senator has hinted at returning to work anytime soon.

[Sen. Sheila Harsdorf \(R-District 10\)](#)

- Sen. Sheila Harsdorf has stated that she is in support of the governor's budget repair bill.

- No committee meetings are set for Harsdorf for the week.

[Rep. Dean Knudson \(R-District 30\)](#)

- Rep. Dean Knudson has stated that he is in support of the governor's budget repair bill.
- No committee meetings are set for Knudson for the week.

[Sen. Ron Johnson \(R-WI\)](#)

- On Monday, Feb. 14, Sen. Ron Johnson released a brief statement on his [Senate webpage](#) in response to [President Obama's proposed budget for 2012](#). In the press release, Johnson stated, "The American people clearly recognize that our spending, deficit, and debt are at unsustainable levels, but the president's budget maintains the status quo." The full statement is available on [Johnson's Senate website](#).
- [The U.S. Government Accountability Office](#) released its bi-annual [High Risk List](#). The list highlights major problems that pose a risk for government waste, fraud and mismanagement. Johnson released a statement on his [webpage](#) stating that the GAO report "is an important framework to focus our efforts, and highlights the area of government most in need of repair."
- Johnson has voiced his support for Walker's budget repair bill. Johnson stated that he is "incredibly proud of the leadership and courage Gov. Scott Walker and the Republican members of Wisconsin's State Assembly and Senate are showing against incredible opposition. Not only is Gov. Walker leading the State of Wisconsin, but he is also leading the nation."

[Sen. Herb Kohl \(D-WI\)](#)

- Sen. Herb Kohl introduced legislation on Feb. 16, which if passed, would extend access to [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) loan guarantees. In December, the 2008 Farm Bill expired, causing limits to be placed on loans for the first time in years. The bill has some bi-partisan support, and was co-sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#).
- Kohl introduced legislation on Feb. 17, seeking to permit the [Department of Justice](#) to bring action against foreign states—specifically members of the [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries \(OPEC\)](#)—for their practices of price setting or limiting the production of oil. The legislation, appropriately titled NOPEC (No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels), has some bi-partisan support, and was co-authored [Sen. Olympia Snowe \(R-ME\)](#) and [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#), among others. Similar versions of this legislation were introduced in prior sessions, but never passed through Congress.

- Kohl stated his concerns with Walker's budget repair bill, commenting that "Public workers deserve fair treatment and their interests should be taken into consideration as these issues are resolved. I'm concerned about the well-being of their families and hope these matters can be settled in a respectful and balanced way."

[Rep. Ron Kind \(D-WI-03 District\)](#)

- Rep. Ron Kind also released a [press statement](#) on his [congressional webpage](#), in response to [President Obama's proposed budget for 2012](#). Kind stated the the proposed budget "is a start, but more needs to be done."
- On Feb. 19, Kind voted against the \$60 billion budget cut bill in the [House of Representatives](#). The bill passed with a 235-189 vote. Kind had been critical of the bill, stating that it "fails to create jobs and stimulate economic growth."
- Kind sent a letter to Walker, urging the governor to withdraw his proposal to end collective bargaining for public workers.
- Kind has scheduled two listening sessions for the coming week, with the focus of each session being deficit reduction. The first is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 22, at 1:30 pm in the [Dunn County Board Room](#) at [Menomonie City Hall](#). The second is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 23 at 10 a.m. in the council chambers of the [Prairie du Chien City Hall](#).

What do you think about Gov. Scott Walker's decision to eliminate collective bargaining for some state employees in his budget repair bill? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

Wisconsin And The Future Of Public Worker Unions

Posted: February 21, 2011 at 6:20 am



Successful political activity often spreads from one geographic area to another. That has certainly been true among financially weak countries in Europe. It is now happening among nations in the Middle East where citizens are calling for democracy.

A much less important trend by comparison to these others may spread to US state governments. The decision by the Republican governor in Wisconsin, Scott Walker, to break state public worker unions may be a solution to part of the spending problems which have helped create a [budget](#) deficit in the state. Walker has gone farther. He means to kill the ability of public employees to negotiate through collective bargaining. That would allow him nearly complete power to set compensation for some state workers.

Walker's plans, if they are successful, will be a blue print for other troubled states from New York to California. Governors are being pressed, along with legislatures in some states, to cut budgets sharply. The head of Moody's recently said that concerns about local and state debt could cause downgrades and make money more difficult to raise. Investors want to see that kind of austerity that has been initiated in Europe. US public unions have been able to set high pension plans and generous benefits in many states. Now those states have to keep benefits in place and fund underfunded pensions. It looks unlikely that states will gain the right to go bankrupt. Cost cuts are the only means to balanced budgets sometimes combined with higher taxes.

Solutions will not be based on cookie cutter solutions but they will resemble one another. What is politically acceptable in Wisconsin will become politically acceptable in elsewhere especially if Governor Walker moves close to balancing the state's budget.

The battle between the Walker and public unions in Wisconsin is not just a local issue of which gets the upper hand. It is a precedent for a movement which could reach many states as they struggle to stay above water.

Douglas A. McIntyre