

Scott Walker vs. the Unions

Part 2: Unintended consequences: Wisconsin goes Right to Work, and Walker seeks a promotion

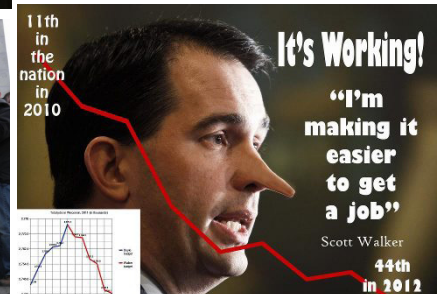
By Steven J. Allen

Summary: In last month's issue of Labor Watch, we examined the early stages of the struggle between unions and Wisconsin's combative governor, Scott Walker—his reform efforts, the initial protests, efforts to recall Walker and his allies, and the “John Doe” raids targeting supporters of reform. This month, we look at his reelection campaign and the biggest twist of all: Wisconsin, birthplace of so-called Progressivism, becomes a Right to Work state.

As the 2014 election neared, and the unions had their third chance to stop Walker, the Governor appeared to be in danger of losing. In mid-October, the RealClearPolitics average of polls had Walker ahead by only 47.7 to 47.3. Given that challengers usually receive the lion's share of undecided voters, any incumbent polling under 50 percent with a challenger close behind is in serious trouble.

Walker's opponent was formidable: Mary Burke, who had served as the state's Secretary of Commerce under former Gov. Jim Doyle, Walker's predecessor. Burke won the Democratic primary 83-17 over state Rep. Brett Hulse. Hulse was considered a gadfly. A liberal, he had reportedly tried to make a deal to join the GOP caucus in the Assembly, then, supposedly to satirize Republicans' racism, dressed as a Confederate major to greet Republicans attending their state convention.

Burke was rich, the daughter of the founder of Trek Bicycle Corporation, and her wealth was spotlighted during the campaign. Democrats cheered her ability to “self-finance” her campaign. That's an important quality in a candidate today,



Unions and their allies have been unrelenting in their attacks on Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

given that campaign finance laws make it difficult for people of modest means to raise money for a major campaign. Burke eventually spent a reported \$5 million of her own money in the governor's race.

Republicans questioned Burke's ability to understand the problems of working-class people and small-business-class people, particularly in light of her attacks on the Tea Party movement. It turned out that, to win her only elective office, a local school board seat in Madison, she had spent \$128,000 of her own money. Particularly damaging to Burke was the revelation that she had taken off from work for two years to “find herself” and go snowboarding in Colorado and Argentina. (Details of the trip are murky because Burke refused to clarify what happened.) “Yes, she's a wealthy business owner who took time off to snowboard,” wrote Joan Walsh of the left-wing online publication *Salon*,

but “She's also a philanthropist who gave her time and money to Madison's Boys and Girls Club” and other nonprofits.

Walsh wrote that, “In the crowd of mostly retirees [at a Burke campaign event], there's a fondness for Burke, an odd gratitude that this affluent woman, a comparative newcomer to politics, has graced their party, and their state, with such a high-minded campaign. If this is noblesse oblige, bring it on.”

July 2015

Scott Walker vs. the Unions
Page 1

Labor Notes
Page 8

Like many Democratic candidates in 2014, Burke sought women's votes by accusing her opponent of conducting a war on women. Walsh noted in the article, written about a month before the election, that, while Walker had consolidated his rural, suburban, and male base, Burke had not been so effective with her own base, but "campaigns by Emily's List and Planned Parenthood are designed to turn that around." (Emily's List is a group that raises money for female pro-abortion candidates, and Planned Parenthood is a pro-abortion group funded by taxpayers.)

Walsh's criticism of Walker was typical: "Walker is both the product of the grim racial politics that have polarized Wisconsin, and its leading modern purveyor. He's cut funding for mass transit and welfare programs, slashed the state's Earned Income Tax Credit to 140,000 working poor families, and now he wants to drug test welfare recipients—after a top staffer was caught laughing at a joke comparing them to dogs." (That's a reference to a satirical e-mail, cited approvingly by a Walker aide when Walker was county executive, featuring a joke about dogs who were said to be suited for welfare because they were "lazy," "can't speak English," and so on.)

In the same article, Walsh attacked Walker for "his far-right political posturing, his union busting and"—comparing his supporters to dogs—"his dog-whistle politics."

Burke's campaign highlighted her support for Common Core and Obamacare

Editor: Steven J. Allen

Publisher: Terrence Scanlon

Address: 1513 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1480

Phone: (202) 483-6900

E-mail: sallen@CapitalResearch.org

Website: CapitalResearch.org

Labor Watch is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Reprints are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

healthcare rationing and her opposition to voter ID laws. Despite her claim to care about the plight of poor people, she opposed school choice and supported raising the so-called minimum wage, which bars unskilled workers from most jobs.

Too close to call?

The race seemed close. Amanda Turkel in the left-wing *Huffington Post* reported that "Democrats were holding out hope that they would be able to knock off a potential 2016 presidential contender" and that Burke was "running neck and neck with Walker up until the end" and "Walker seemed worried about his re-election chances up until the end."

The Republican national chairman, Reince Priebus, who is from Wisconsin, told *Slate* that Walker's race was such a high priority that it would not be a "good night" if Republicans took back the Senate but Walker lost. "Walker represents not just the future of Wisconsin, but the future of our party and the future of people that make promises and keep promises, and whether they can be rewarded for doing those things."

Betsy Woodruff of *Slate* covered Walker's victory celebration:

"First off, I want to thank God." Gov. Scott Walker had just come on stage at the State Fair Exposition Center to give his third victory speech in four years, and the supporters mashed up in front of the stage were totally losing it. "I want to thank God for his abundant grace and mercy," Walker continued. "Win or lose, it is more than sufficient for each and every one of us." The crowd exploded.

It's nice of Walker to throw in that "win or lose" line, but he didn't really need it. Walker doesn't lose. The governor first got elected in 2010 by 5.8 points, won an acrimonious recall election in 2012 by 6.8 points, and looks set to win his first real re-election bid by about 6 points.

Walker's supporters at the victory party were elated but not surprised. They argued his win was in the cards from jump street, that Democratic

nominee Mary Burke's dependence on out-of-state support backfired, and that Walker's superhuman ability to stay on message made re-election way easier than it looked to many (including me!). The governor had a straightforward strategy, and he stuck to it.

Woodruff listed among the key reasons for Walker's win:

► A strong grassroots organization, with 23 offices around the state. "I've been doing state races for 25 years," said state Representative John Nygren. "This is the most door-to-door intensive race I've seen in the 25 years I've been around."

► A "total non-interest in appearing with outside surrogates," instead touring with Republican leaders in their home districts. Woodruff noted that "New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie also visited the state to campaign for Walker, but that's because he invited himself."

► Related to the above item, Walker's ability to tap into anti-Washington sentiment.

[About a month before the election,] with Burke's supporters outspending Walker's, negative ads swamped the airwaves. Burke drew significant support from Emily's List, an organization that backs pro-choice female Democratic candidates, and she also won backing from labor organizations and the president himself, who visited to hold a rally for her. Walker loyalists said that as money from outside groups and unions poured into the state for Burke and as her campaign came to be associated with its out-of-state surrogates (first lady Michelle Obama stumped for her twice), voters got recall flashbacks. . . . "I used to tell the Democrats they helped us with the recall," [said state GOP First Vice Chairman Brian Schimming,] "because they spent so much time trying to go after him that they really turned off a lot of people." . . .

While Walker was repeating the same simple pitch throughout the state,

national labor organizations were running ads targeting the governor and Burke was hobnobbing with the president and first lady in the state's two most liberal cities, Madison and Milwaukee. If Burke bet on this being an anti-incumbent election cycle, Walker bet on its being anti-Washington. And he bet right.

Meanwhile, as Walker won re-election, Republicans picked up seats in the state legislature.

As reported by the website Ballotpedia, Democrats had been optimistic about taking over the state Senate. "The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee listed the Wisconsin Senate as one of eight chambers [in the country] of which the Democrats could take control. In a debate with Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R), Senate Minority Leader Chris Larson (D) said Gov. Scott Walker's [low] poll numbers were a sign his party will win. Fitzgerald argued that President Barack Obama's drop in popularity would instead help the Republicans. The Wisconsin State Senate was one of 20 state legislative chambers noted by Ballotpedia staff as being a battleground chamber." Yet, with only half the Senate seats on the ballot in 2014, Republicans improved their margin from 17-15 (with one vacancy) to 19-14.

In addition, two outgoing Republican Senators described as "moderates" had been replaced by more conservative lawmakers.

In the other house, the Assembly, where all seats were up for election, the Republican margin went from 60-38 (with one independent) to 63-34 (two independents). It was the GOP's best showing in that chamber since the 1956 election.

Regarding the Right to Work issue, Betsy Woodruff wrote on the night of the 2014 election that "It's hard to believe that Walker would have the appetite for another round of union battles. But it was also hard to believe he would win three elections in four years, and that he would win this last one, against an opponent whose backers outspent his by a cushy

margin. So here's some analysis: When it's Scott Walker, the unlikely is never that far-fetched."

Backlash: Right to Work

There's an old expression in politics, "If you shoot at a king, don't miss." In the matter of the unions vs. Scott Walker, unions paid the price for their failed attempts to stop Walker and his reforms. Amazingly, Wisconsin became a Right to Work state.

What happened in Wisconsin is similar to what happened in Michigan, the other state most closely associated with the union movement. That state had a longstanding truce between unions and businesses regarding Right to Work laws—that is, laws that protect workers from being forced to join a union or pay the equivalent of union dues as a condition of employment. Then, in 2012, the unions attempted to pass an amendment to the state constitution, Proposal 2, that would have given union contracts priority over state laws; would have affected some 170 existing statutes; and would have effectively given the unions control of state government on labor-related issues. Prop. 2 would have barred the legislature from ever passing a Right to Work law. Despite a \$28 million union campaign for the amendment, it was voted down by 58-42 percent. That occurred even as President Obama was winning Michigan by nine points and Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D) was winning by 21 points.

Right to Work supporters pointed out that the unions had broken the truce, and they moved quickly to take advantage of the backlash against the union's power grab. "Quickly" is an understatement: Final passage of the state's RTW law came a mere five weeks after the rejection of Proposal 2. [For more on Michigan Proposal 2 and the RTW backlash, see the December 2012 and January 2013 *Labor Watch*.]

Before the 2014 election, Walker and his legislative allies hadn't expressed much interest in passing a Right to Work law that would protect workers in the private sector. As a member of the State Assembly in 1993, Walker had co-sponsored a Right

to Work bill, but that was back when the idea of Wisconsin becoming a Right to Work state seemed like an impossible dream.

At the end of November, Walker's spokesman, Laurel Patrick, was still claiming that, "As he has said previously, Governor Walker's focus is on growing Wisconsin's economy and creating jobs. Anything that distracts from that is not a priority for him."

However, supporters of workers' rights realized that they had the opportunity of a lifetime. On December 1, conservative activist Lorri Pickens announced the formation of a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting RTW in Wisconsin. She had served from 2005 to 2007 as state director for the free-market group Americans for Prosperity. She had also been a lobbyist for the pro-life group Wisconsin Family Action and campaign manager for a state constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage.

Walker continued to downplay the Right to Work idea, noting on December 3 that, "As I said before the election and have said repeatedly over the last few years, I just think right-to-work legislation right now . . . would be a distraction from the work that we're trying to do."

On December 4, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald signaled that the issue was suddenly on his front-burner: "It's my opinion it has to come up early . . . I don't know how we get through the session without having this debate."

That week, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos—who had stated during the summer that he did not intend to pursue the matter—released a statement saying he was now willing to discuss it. And State Rep. Chris Kapenga said in an interview with the MacIver Institute that he would introduce RTW legislation because, "To me, it is the single most important thing we can do to help move this economy forward."

The Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) organization polled its members and found that Right to Work was their second-highest priority after tax

reductions. The poll, sent to 1,200 executives of whom 261 responded, asked what the state government could do to improve the business climate. From the eight choices provided, “reduce taxes” came in first with 35 percent, while “become a right to work state” was second with 15 percent. Asked in a January survey if they supported Right to Work, 81 percent of respondents answered yes. Over the next three months, WMC’s 501(c)(4) organization would play a key role in promoting the Right to Work idea.

They didn’t see it coming

Right to Work opponents couldn’t really believe it was happening. Used to dealing with Republicans and self-described conservatives who shy away from controversy, they kept asking: Did Walker and the Republicans really want a repeat of what happened in 2011, when tens of thousands of protesters disrupted the Capitol?

The Assembly’s Minority Leader, Peter Barca, said people would be “extremely alarmed” if an RTW measure were to pass. People would protest it like they did Act 10. The polarization would “create a schism that would take decades to overcome,” Barca told the *Capital Times*.

Scot Ross of the liberal group One Wisconsin Now theorized that Walker would avoid the conflict. As a potential candidate for president, Ross said, Walker would want to pass a budget as quickly and quietly as possible. “He doesn’t want the country to think every time he does something . . . Wisconsin erupts.” In fact, Ross suggested, bringing up Right to Work was a bluff and a bargaining chip; Assembly Speaker Robin Vos would use it to get what he wanted from Governor Walker.

At the end of January, the Tarrance Group, a Republican polling firm, released a poll indicating that Right to Work was far from the divisive issue that opponents claimed

it was. The firm reported that 69 percent of voters supported allowing workers to decide whether or not to join a union. That included 51 percent of union households and 48 percent of Democrats.

At that point, it was beginning to become clear that Walker would do nothing to stop the Right to Work train. The spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Fitzgerald told reporters that Fitzgerald “has not been asked by the Governor not to pursue the issue at this time.”

By February 20, when Walker said he would sign the legislation that legislative leaders were preparing to fast-track, state officials were “bracing for potential protests at the state Capitol,” reported the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Fitzgerald said he gave the Governor’s office notice about the fast-tracking in order, as a news report paraphrased him, “to give officials time to plan for the possible onslaught.”

Despite the chance of riotous protests, it was time to take action. “My experience as leader is when you have the votes, you go to the floor,” said Fitzgerald.

Not all the opposition came from unions—at least, not directly from unions. The Wisconsin Contractor’s Coalition, made up of more than 300 construction-related companies (and backed by the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 18), came out against Right to Work. The stated reason was that Right to Work laws interfere in private contracts between employers and employees. Critics said that the unstated reason, the real reason, was crony capitalism in the form of prevailing-wage laws. Members of the coalition support such laws, which require the payment of union-level wages on government projects. Prevailing-wage laws rip off the taxpayers—and help unionized companies—by preventing non-union companies from underbidding the unionized companies. The laws add about 20 percent to the cost of building schools, roads, and other government-funded construction. (Later, the legislators who pushed Wisconsin Right to Work would begin an effort to repeal the state’s prevailing-wage law.)

See you in court

The war between Scott Walker and the unions was often waged in battles for control of the courts. The state Supreme Court retained its 4-3 tilt in favor of conservatives/moderates on April 2, 2013, when Justice Patience Roggensack won a second 10-year term with 57 percent of the vote, defeating Ed Fallone, a Marquette university law professor backed by Democrats and unions.

In the same election, the *Journal-Sentinel* reported, “An Ozaukee County judge lost his job Tuesday when voters sided with a challenger critical of the incumbent’s 2011 signature on a petition to recall Gov. Scott Walker. Attorney Joe Voiland defeated Circuit Judge Tom Wolfgram, a three-term incumbent. . . .”

Last September, state Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson stuck a finger in the eye of Walker and his allies by hiring, as her executive assistant, former Circuit Court Judge Andrew Bissonnette, who, while in office, signed the Walker recall petition. Some 29 judges across the state signed the petitions, according to Gannett Wisconsin Media.

But Bissonnette’s position as executive assistant to the chief justice wouldn’t last long. Republican legislators approved an amendment to the state constitution allowing the members of the state Supreme Court to elect their own chief justice, rather than having that position go to the longest-serving justice, as had been the case for 126 years. Voters approved the amendment by 53-47 percent in April.

When voters approved the amendment, an anti-First Amendment group, the Center for Media and Democracy, complained on its website: “Scott Walker unseated his sharpest opponent last night. But you won’t learn that from much of the media coverage.” That analysis turned out to be correct: Just three weeks after the amendment was approved, the left-wing Abrahamson—on the court since 1976—was ousted from her post as chief and replaced by conservative Justice Patience Roggensack.

Once again, Walker and his allies sent a message to the Left: Bring it on.

By the way, the WCC was caught in a false statement about the survey by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, claiming that “WMC’s own 2014 survey revealed that just 15 percent of business executive respondents were in favor of Right-To-Work legislation.” The *Journal-Sentinel’s* PolitiFact, after noting the actual results of the survey (see above), labeled that statement False. The false statement was actually part of a pattern: Anti-RTW forces kept telling themselves that Right to Work wasn’t very popular, that business people and other RTW supporters weren’t very enthusiastic about it, and that there would be an explosion of opposition to RTW legislation.

You’ve lost that protestin’ feelin’

By the time the legislature voted on Right to Work, much of the fire seemed gone from the union movement in Wisconsin. During a 24-hour debate on RTW, there was shouting from the gallery. Police removed the shouters. The gallery remained empty. About 300 protesters showed up. Two of them were arrested for screaming obscenities. By 10 p.m., most of them were gone.

News reports described the unions as resigned to the inevitability of Right to Work. The *New York Times* quoted a 62-year-old protester who said, “You’ve got to fight back,” but “it’s a generational process. It’s going to take 25 to 40 years to correct problems Scott Walker’s done in four-and-a-half years.”

Unions managed to bus some 3,000 workers to Madison on February 28, where, in the words of the magazine *The Economist*, “they rallied in frigid temperatures ringing cow bells, waving American flags and holding up signs such as ‘Stop the war on workers.’”

In the left-wing *Cap Times* Dennis Boyer, a retired AFSCME staff member, lamented:

How did Wisconsin go from a vibrant pro-union state to a hotbed of reactionary politics? How did we get from the Wisconsin of Bob La Follette and Gaylord Nelson to the Wisconsin of Scott Walker and his buddies the Koch brothers? . . .

I have been asked many times since the dropping of the Act 10 bomb on public employees what might have been done differently. Many thousands of union members and supporters ringed the Capitol and raised their voices. I spent many hours there and it felt hopeful. Then it was over. We didn’t raise the political costs to the level sufficient to give our enemies pause (yes, in a war there are enemies). As I left the last Wisconsin Uprising rally, I wondered, why did electric power continue to state buildings during that time (same with the steam heat) and why did school sessions continue and buses roll? It seemed like a major battle had raged and our side had held back.

It seems to me, when faced with an existential crisis, that the full array of tactics and bold measures must be considered, and, after due consideration, be deployed incrementally or simultaneously as resources and circumstances dictate. . . . There was room to organize all manner of slow-downs, sit-downs, and gumming up of the public sector. Even after the passage of Act 10, there could have been an ongoing campaign of guerrilla labor action behind management’s lines. This is the era of asymmetrical warfare, of hacking, of fragile networks of communication. Business as usual can be disrupted.

Similar and different

Unions and their supporters expressed outrage over the fact that the law seemed taken from model legislation prepared by the American Legislative Exchange Council, an organization of conservative/mainstream state legislators that is despised by the Left. They suggested that this was somehow sinister, although the use of model legislation is very common in state legislatures—to avoid drafting mistakes, unintended consequences, and legal challenges, and to foster consistency between states with similar approaches—and the use of an ALEC model by conservative or pro-growth legislators would hardly be surprising.

Myranda Tanck, spokesman for Senator Fitzgerald, said the Wisconsin bill was modeled closely on Indiana’s Right to Work law because Indiana’s version had already survived multiple challenges in court. Using Indiana’s law as a model would ensure that the Wisconsin version was on stable legal ground.

The Wisconsin bill did have one difference. In a clever move, the Wisconsin legislation was written to take effect immediately once it became law. Recently adopted Right to Work laws in other states had a waiting period. Under the prevailing legal view, Right to Work laws affect new contracts, but do not (or might not) affect existing ones, which means that any delay gives unions the chance to renegotiate current, non-RTW contracts, and extend periods in which those contracts remain in effect, often for years. The Wisconsin legislation would slam the door on that practice. Democrats in the legislature failed in their attempt to delay the effective date by three months.

For a time, as the legislature worked on the Right to Work measure, there was speculation that Republicans might carve out an exemption for operating engineers, pipe fitters, and certain other unions that provide training for their members. After all, the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 139, whose members run the heavy equipment on infrastructure projects, had sometimes supported Republican candidates. For example, it gave almost \$58,000 to Walker’s campaigns for governor, including some \$43,000 just before the 2014 election.

There was precedent: Police and firefighters had been exempted from provisions of Act 10, and that exemption had been important to the political success of the reforms.

In the end, though, the law had no exemptions. It was decided that an exemption in the Right to Work law would make it easier to challenge in court as a violation of the Constitutional requirement for equal protection under the law.

Right to Work state #25

After eight hours of debate in the Senate, the bill passed 17-15 on February 25,

2015. Except for one Republican who voted with Democrats, it was a party-line vote.

Over that weekend, unions mobilized a protest at the Capitol led by Wisconsin AFL-CIO. The protests were pitiful affairs compared to the screaming hordes that had shaken Madison during the incendiary Act 10 debates. The roar had become a whimper.

Why? Some insiders speculate that the protests had a low turnout this time either because the unions had been exhausted physically and financially by Act 10, or because there is a relatively low unionization rate for Wisconsin's private sector compared to its government employees. Too, events unfolded so swiftly that even if the money and anger had been there, the unions might nevertheless have been outmaneuvered by Right to Work advocates.

Approval by the Assembly, with its huge GOP majority, was a foregone conclusion. The measure passed on Friday, March 6, and was signed by Governor Walker on Monday, March 9.

Signing it was "the right thing to do for job creators and employees alike. But you know how it is: It threatens the power the Big Government Labor Bosses crave and they are going to come after him with everything they've got," read an e-mail from Friends of Scott Walker.

President Obama said in a statement, "there's been a sustained, coordinated assault on unions, led by powerful interests and their allies in government. So I'm deeply disappointed that a new anti-worker law in Wisconsin will weaken, rather than strengthen workers in the new economy." He accused Walker of "claim[ing] victory over working Americans" by signing the Right to Work law.

"One thing is certain now," wrote state Rep. Leon D. Young. "Scott Walker is running for president, and the state of Wisconsin is the next casualty of his blind, ruthless ambition."

"For the scabs that choose to quit paying dues," read an e-mail sent by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to some 1,300 members, "their names will

be published and posted so members will know who the scabs are who do not pay dues." [For more on union intimidation of "scabs," see the April 2015 *Labor Watch*.]

Ned Resnikoff of Al Jazeera wrote of RTW's passage:

Ten years ago, the notion that traditionally union-friendly Wisconsin could become a right-to-work state would have been almost unthinkable. By last week it was inevitable. . . . That legislation . . . was a major victory for Walker, despite his earlier insistence that he was not interested in pushing right-to-work legislation.

Although he never said he would oppose such a law on the merits, he repeatedly indicated that he did not want to get involved in the sort of political battle it would likely provoke.

Now that the battle is over, the Republicans in the statehouse have passed the legislation and Walker has given it his signature, he is more than happy to claim ownership. Last week he for the first time said that right-to-work legislation was something "we" proposed in early 2015—"we" meaning Walker and the Republican-controlled legislature, not just the latter. Whatever Walker's role in shepherding this particular bill to passage, he is right to claim some of the credit for making Wisconsin a right-to-work state. The legislation he signed into law Monday was made possible by his earlier triumphs over the state's labor movement.

His victories offer a lesson to policymakers in other states: If you intend to hobble the labor movement as a whole, go after the public sector unions first. . . . The GOP was able to push through right-to-work legislation with relative ease because the local labor movement had already been dealt a body blow. As a result, Wisconsin's experience seems to have served as an object lesson for other governors who favor right-to-work policies. For example, Bruce Rauner, the recently elected governor of Illinois, has tried to impose right-

to-work on the public sector by way of executive order.

Not the typical Republican

It should be noted that Walker had help in shifting the ideological direction of Wisconsin politics. For example, there's the Bradley Foundation, a CRC supporter that helped fund such state institutions as the MacIver Institute for Public Policy, the watchdog group Media Trackers, and the *Wisconsin Reporter*, a news website backed by the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity.

Again, *Slate's* Betsy Woodruff:

[P]retend you're Scott Walker and you've just gotten inaugurated on a cold January day in 2011. You're governing a state that birthed the modern labor movement and that's been a stronghold for the blue-collar Democrats for most of the modern era. You're in power, but your situation is—to put it lightly—precarious. How do you govern? If you were a typical governor in a typical version of that scenario, you would govern very, very cautiously. You would tiptoe. You would hedge. You would compromise. You would be Mitt Romney.

But Scott Walker is not Mitt Romney. And a large part of the reason he implemented such a proactively conservative agenda—defunding Planned Parenthood, dramatically curtailing public-sector unions' power, passing Right to Work legislation—is because of the conservative infrastructure that simultaneously pushed him in that direction and made that direction an easy way to go.

It was the combination of a strong conservative infrastructure with Walker's combative personality that made the Wisconsin revolution possible.

The end of the beginning?

Walker won gubernatorial races with 52.2 percent in 2010, 53.1 percent in 2012, and 52.3 percent in 2014, in a state that hasn't voted Republican for president since Reagan—which means, one observer noted,

“He compromised just far enough to win, and not one inch more. Grassroots Republicans are fed up with party leaders who wilt in the face of opposition, and they see Walker as someone who is willing to fight.” Walker’s negatives include his lack of experience in foreign affairs and the fact that elitists will make fun of him for not graduating from college. But Dick Morris, former political consultant for Bill Clinton, called Walker “ambidextrous” for his appeal to both establishment and grassroots Republicans, and said he is “the [Chris] Christie who succeeded.”

In January, Walker spoke at the Freedom Summit in Des Moines, a gathering sponsored by Citizens United and by U.S. Representative Steve King (R-Iowa), a Tea Party leader. Michael Barone, the dean of Washington political analysts, likened the Walker speech to one given in the same city by another candidate.

Can a single speech at an Iowa political event change the course of a presidential nomination race? Maybe. It actually has happened. Barack Obama’s November 2007 speech at a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in Des Moines is generally credited with giving him a lift toward winning the caucuses there two months later and putting him on the path to the presidency.

Perhaps it happened again, ten months earlier in the 2016 cycle, when Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker spoke January 24 at the Freedom Summit . . . Walker’s speech—one of more than a dozen—got rave reviews from the crowd and reporters present. More prominently and notably, it seems to have gotten rave reviews from a much wider swath of Iowa Republican voters. A *Des Moines Register*/Bloomberg poll, conducted by Ann Selzer’s firm January 26-29, showed Walker leading the field of potential Republican candidates with 15 percent of the vote.

Reporters in Des Moines were expecting a boring Midwestern guy. Walker proved to be an exciting Midwestern guy—raised in Iowa

for seven years, he pointed out, until his pastor father moved to next-door Wisconsin. Many activists in the crowd, but by no means all Iowa Republicans, knew that he had battled the public employee unions in Wisconsin—and that the left, which prides itself on compassion and civility, responded with riots and death threats and a June 2012 recall election. Walker won that contest as he had in 2010 and did again in 2014: three elections in four years in a state that has voted Democratic for president since 1988. . . .

[Walker] was elected County Executive three times in Milwaukee County (67 percent Obama 2012). In the 2010 primary for governor, against a candidate who had won a statewide nomination before, Walker won an amazing 76 percent in the four-county Milwaukee metro area, and he carried that metro area against Democrats in 2010, 2012 and 2014. He continues to live in the close-in suburb of Wauwatosa, which voted 50 percent Obama, 49 percent Romney: much like America.

As a likely candidate for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, Walker actually led the RealClearPolitics average of national polls in March before falling slightly behind two Floridians, former Governor Jeb Bush and Senator Marco Rubio. In early May, he scored a three-point lead (over Bush) in the first and most important primary state, New Hampshire.

Walker supporters see his stand against the unions as an indication of what he would do as President. They note, as Walker does, that when President Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers in 1981, his action set the tone for his entire administration in both domestic and foreign policy. It sent a message to adversaries, including the Soviets, that Reagan was not a man to be trifled with. (A 2011 headline in the *New York Times* called the air traffic controllers’ strike “The Strike That Busted Unions,” leading to the precipitous decline of unions in America.)

In February, speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference, the largest annual gathering of conservatives, Walker, his sleeves rolled up, declared that, in the face of threats like ISIS, the country needs a “leader” with “confidence.” He added: “If I can take on 100,000 protesters, I can do the same across the world.” That comment was characterized by the Left as Walker comparing his union opponents (and their families, of course) to ISIS terrorists; Democrats in the state legislature demanded an apology, and he was denounced in the media by the likes of Chris Matthews of MSNBC.

Each time he was denounced, the denunciation reminded future Republican primary voters of Walker’s stand against those 100,000 protesters.

Today, Republicans seem to be looking for a candidate with political courage—someone who won’t give in when the Left comes after him or her with all the weapons in its arsenal, including domination of almost all the communications media, domination of academia, and the astonishing wealth of “crony capitalists” who benefit from Big Government spending and from special treatment for well-heeled special interests. GOP voters, it appears, are sick of Republican officeholders who act as if they are in a minority on issues even when the public agrees with them. They are tired of seeing their own leaders practice the art of pre-emptive surrender. They want a fighter.

In 1980, when the economy was broken and the world was falling into the hands of America’s enemies, Americans turned to a governor who had proven his mettle by standing his ground against vicious enemies and beating them.

Will history repeat itself?

Dr. Steven J. Allen (JD, PhD) is editor of Labor Watch.

LW

Please remember CRC in your will and estate planning.

**Terrence Scanlon
President**

LaborNotes

It took four tries, but workers at the **NTN-Bower** plant in **Hamilton, Alabama**, have voted 82-50 to dump the **United Auto Workers** union after 39 years of UAW representation. Three previous decertification elections had been declared invalid due to various irregularities. The **Japanese**-owned plant produces bearings mostly for **Caterpillar** and for railroad cars. The union had apparently won the previous decertification vote, until a problem was discovered: "Even though 139 workers out of the 140 eligible voted in the third election, 148 ballots were cast," noted the **National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation**. Oops.

Meanwhile, dispatchers at **Allegiant Air** decertified their union, the **Teamsters**, and clerical workers and classroom assistants in the **Cadillac, Michigan** area voted to break with the **Michigan Education Association** and form their own union. Supporters of workers' rights hope to win decertification campaigns in a number of counties in Michigan where teachers' contracts are expiring and new contracts would be under the state's Right to Work law.

With the nation's employment rate—the percentage of working-age Americans with jobs—at its lowest point since the 1970s, you might think the **Obama** administration would pursue policies to increase the number of jobs. Instead, it backs raises that would effectively ban millions of unskilled workers from having jobs. "Raising the minimum wage by a substantial amount would price working poor people out of the job market," the **New York Times** editorialized in 1987, before the editorial board became utterly left-wing.

The **Los Angeles city council** raised the local minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2020, but one group wants to enjoy an exemption: unions. **Rusty Hicks**, head of the county **Federation of Labor** and a leader of "**Raise the Wage**," told the **Los Angeles Times** that, when it comes to *his* union, free-market rules should apply: "With a collective bargaining agreement, a business owner and the employees negotiate an agreement that works for them both. The agreement allows each party to prioritize what is important to them. This provision gives the parties the option, the freedom, to negotiate that agreement. And that is a good thing."

Such an exemption already applies in **San Francisco**, where the minimum wage rises in steps to \$15 an hour by 2018, and in **Chicago**. Unions that demand higher local minimum wage laws often have themselves exempted—because such exemptions force employers to unionize in order to avoid the higher wages and stay in business.

CNN reported on San Francisco's **Borderland Books**, where the owner for the past 18 years, **Alan Beatts**, "pays nearly all of his employees close to minimum wage. So the hike, which was approved by voters in November, means he'll have to give five raises in less than four years. His payroll cost would increase 39% over that time period. Even before the minimum wage increase, Beatts wasn't making much. He only pays himself \$28,000 a year. And even though he's kept wages low, payroll is still his biggest expense after rent." Like a good San Franciscan, Beatts supports the hike in principle, of course, but "the hikes are coming too fast for small business owners like himself."

Hilariously, left-wingers often change their tune on issues like the minimum wage when it's their own businesses and their own jobs that are at stake, rather than the jobs of, say, maids and fast-food workers. **CBS News** reported on a vote by members of **Actor's Equity**, the country's largest stage actors' union, which represents some 6,500 stage performers in Los Angeles. The question: whether to apply a minimum wage of \$9 an hour to actors working in theaters with fewer than 99 seats. The union was "pushing for its members to be paid \$9 an hour. But many actors say they don't want the money. They fear getting paid will mean 'curtains' for many of L.A.'s small theaters. 'It's not a choice of \$9 an hour or acting for free, it's a choice of acting or not acting in a space like this,' [one member] said. . . . [A]ctor-producer **Noah Wyle**, who is staging the play '**Sons of the Prophet**,' said big profits are impossible in a theater with fewer than 100 seats." Indeed, "You couldn't open your doors," said Wyle, a liberal activist who got rich appearing on the TV series **ER**.

What happened when the actors voted? They voted two-to-one against the hike. "We are proud of our members who shared their insightful views and spoke with such passion," said Actor's Equity executive director **Mary McColl**... after the union's national leaders *ignored the members' vote* and imposed the new wage anyway.