

Top 10 Reasons to Support Wisconsin Governor Walker's Budget Repair Bill

By: Julie Borowski

Governor Scott Walker's budget repair bill has motivated tens of thousands of Tea Party backers and public sector union members to gather at the steps of the Wisconsin State Capitol over the past two weeks. The main part of the bill would eliminate some collective bargaining for select public sector union workers. Listed below are the top 10 reasons to support the bill:

1. Wisconsin is facing a \$3.6 billion budget deficit.

The Department of Administration predicts that Wisconsin will face a \$3.6 billion deficit between 2011 and 2013. Politicians have long been promising excessive salaries and benefits to public sector workers that taxpayers cannot sustain.¹ Governor Walker's reasonable request to limit public sector collective bargaining will help curb government spending to save taxpayers' money.

2. Wisconsin public school teachers get paid nearly double private sector workers.

The average Wisconsin public school teacher gets paid \$100,000 annually in compensation, \$50,000 in wages and \$45,000 for very generous benefits packages. In Milwaukee, the largest city in Wisconsin, the average private sector worker makes only \$53,724 annually in compensation.² It's unsustainable that taxpayers have to foot the bill for bloated public sector workers' pay.

3. Wisconsin public teachers pay little of their health care and pension costs.

Out of every dollar that public school teachers receive in salary, taxpayers pay 74.2 cents for their retirement and health care costs. In the private sector, the corresponding rate is only 24.3 cents. Due to collective bargaining agreements, the school district pays the entire cost of public school teachers' pension plans. The school district also pays the entire premium for public school teachers' medical and vision benefits and half of the cost of dental coverage. Family health care coverage for public school teachers costs a whopping \$26,844 annually.³

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¹ McCullough, Kevin. *Breaking Public Unions: Good!* [TownHall](http://townhall.com/columnists/kevinmccullough/2011/02/27/breaking_public_unions_good!>). <
http://townhall.com/columnists/kevinmccullough/2011/02/27/breaking_public_unions_good!>

² Costrell, Robert. *Oh, To Be a Teacher in Wisconsin.* [Wall Street Journal](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703408604576164290717724956.html). <
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703408604576164290717724956.html>>

³ IBID.



4. Governor Scott Walker's proposal is very modest.

Governor Scott Walker's plan would make public school teachers pay 5.8 percent of their pension costs and 12.6 percent of their health care costs. This is far below the national average for government workers and it would still be two-thirds or less of what workers in the private sector pay on average. ⁴

5. Public sector collective bargaining is limited or outlawed in 24 states.

Collective bargaining is regularly used to excessively jack up the salaries and benefits of government workers. This is why only 26 states have public sector collective bargaining laws similar to Wisconsin. State employees in 12 states have no legal right to collective bargaining. ⁵

6. Collective bargaining is inconsistent with the right to freedom of association.

All Wisconsin public sector workers are forced to join a union and pay dues whether they wish to or not. Unions certainly do have a right to free speech. However, collective bargaining is inconsistent with the right to freedom of association since some members may disagree with the views of the monopoly union.

7. A clear conflict of interest exists between politicians and public sector unions.

Collective bargaining in the public sector means that public employee unions negotiate their salaries and benefits with self-interested politicians. It has given politicians the opportunity to reward their campaign contributors. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that five of the top ten contributors to congressional and presidential campaigns in the past twenty years are labor unions. Half of the top twenty political action committees by total expenditures are unions. ⁶

8. While a step in the right direction, Governor Walker's proposal does not even go far enough.

Governor Walker's does not restrict the collective bargaining of police officers and fire fighters. States should instead model their labor laws after the federal government. Washington, D.C. is a right to work zone. Federal government employees cannot collectively bargain and they are not required to join a union or pay union dues. If the federal government cannot afford collective bargaining, neither can the states. ⁷

⁴ Ferrara, Peter. *Wisconsin Showdown*. The American Spectator. < <http://spectator.org/archives/2011/02/23/wisconsin-showdown>>

⁵ Barro, Josh. *Obama Playing Both Sides of the Collective Bargaining Issue*. The Examiner. < <http://www.sfexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/2011/02/obama-playing-both-sides-collective-bargaining-issue>>

⁶ Carney, Timothy. *Paul Krugman Epitomizes the Current Liberal Divorce from Reality*. The Examiner. < <http://washingtonexaminer.com/blogs/beltway-confidential/2011/02/paul-krugman-epitomizes-current-liberal-divorce-reality>>

⁷ Strassel, Kimberly. *Union Power for Thee, But Not For Me*. Wall Street Journal. < <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703530504576164822561737348.html>>



9. Governor Scott Walker’s proposal includes other cost savings.

Governor Walker’s bill goes beyond combating overbearing union demands to alleviate the state’s fiscal crisis. The budget repair bill also contains provisions to restructure the State’s debt, reducing service costs by \$165 million this fiscal year. Further, the proposal places State run heat and energy plants up for sale, allowing private sector expansion, job growth, and competition in Wisconsin’s energy industry.

10. Even former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt opposed collective bargaining for public sector workers.

While FDR was one of our most progressive presidents, he rejected collective bargaining for public sector workers. He wrote a letter to the National Federation of Public Employees that “meticulous attention should be paid to the special relationships and obligations of public servants to the public itself and to the Government. All Government employees should realize that the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be translated into the public service.” He further stated that “the very nature and purposes of Government make it impossible for administrative officials to represent fully or bind the employer in mutual discussions with Government employee organizations. The employer is the whole people.”⁸

⁸ Hillyer, Quin. *FDR vs. Wisconsin Teachers*. [The Washington Times](http://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/watercooler/2011/feb/18/fdr-vs-wisconsin-teachers/). <
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/watercooler/2011/feb/18/fdr-vs-wisconsin-teachers/>>

