

Scott Walker Only Listens To What He Wants To Hear

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Brandon Weathersby
Friday, 15 July 2016 11:04 -



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MADISON, WI - Just a day after it was revealed Scott Walker's WEDC was trying to insulate their Board of Directors from public scrutiny by prohibiting them from interacting with the press, a Cap Times report shows Scott Walker has been stacking his closed door listening tour sessions with Republicans and donors. Walker has tried to portray himself as transparent and accessible, but it is clear he has no interest in hearing what all Wisconsinites have to say.

"Wisconsinites expect and deserve elected officials to be open, transparent and listen to all sides of an issue before making their decisions. Scott Walker has shown again he has no interest in what everyday Wisconsinites have to say, stacking these closed door listening sessions with friendly Republicans and his donors," Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Martha Laning said on Friday. "Democrats know if we really want to serve the people of Wisconsin, we have to listen to everybody, not just those who will pat us on the back and tell us what we want to hear."

If Scott Walker were truly listening to all Wisconsinites, he would know that our public education system is severely underfunded and schools are hardly able to keep the lights on; he would know that our infrastructure is in terrible disrepair and Wisconsinites and businesses alike don't feel safe traveling across the state; and he would know that hard working Wisconsinites deserve a raise. It's time Scott Walker did the job he was elected to and properly represent the people of Wisconsin by listening and responding to their needs.

Read excerpts from the article below:

Gov. Scott Walker's office has asked legislators, lobbyists, state agency heads and local economic development agencies to help select attendees for the governor's invite-only listening sessions throughout the state, records show.

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The records provided to the Cap Times offer insight into the selection process for participants in the governor's [marquee effort to reacquaint himself with Wisconsin voters](#) after his failed presidential bid

[...]

"I call it our 2020 Vision Project," Walker said in the address. "The idea is to bring together a diverse mix of people in small group settings all across the state. I want to hear from you about what makes Wisconsin great, where we want our state to be in the next two decades and how we should measure success."

[...]

Sessions are only open to those invited, and while they are closed to media, Walker has met with local reporters for interviews in some locations.

Walker has cited the feedback he receives from the listening sessions [when asked by reporters about his flagging poll numbers](#), arguing there's a disconnect between the numbers and what he hears on the road.

The governor placed blame on the media for focusing on the negatives during a call with reporters last month, adding that "headlines are always negative and bad things."

A Marquette University Law School poll released shortly before the call showed that 46 percent of the state's voters believed the state is heading in the right direction, while 50 percent said it's on the wrong track. Thirty-nine percent said they approve of the governor's job performance, down from 43 percent in March.

[...]

Why the disconnect? Critics of the governor's administration say it's because the listening sessions are composed of overwhelmingly friendly audiences and, in general, people more involved in politics than the average citizen.

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[...]

Attendees who donated have made about 3,800 total donations totaling about \$1.1 million, according to state campaign finance data. Those donations overwhelmingly — at more than 80 percent — favored conservative and Republican candidates and causes.

"Instead of hearing about what's really on the minds of Wisconsinites who overwhelmingly disapprove of the job he's doing, Gov. Walker is tooling around the state on our dime hearing from an exclusive audience recruited to tell him what he wants to hear," said Mike Browne, deputy director of the liberal group One Wisconsin Now.

[...]

Browne and One Wisconsin Now raised questions about the selection process — particularly about the influence of lobbyists and agency heads on the make-up of the audiences.

For instance, Browne noted, childcare workers rely on the state Department of Children and Families to do business. He questioned whether someone recommended by the agency would feel comfortable sharing negative feedback at a listening session.

He also questioned the appropriateness of lobbyists supplying the governor with an audience, noting one exchange in which a lobbyist, asked for names, responded that he also needed to speak with the governor's office about an administrative rule.

"Gov. Walker's office used special interest lobbyists with business before them to find attendees, state agencies were directed to 'invite' people who rely on state government to do business and fellow Republican legislators turned over their lists of local political insiders," Browne said.

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Democrats have been critical of the sessions' exclusivity, arguing they should be open to anyone who wants to attend.

"Politicians hold town hall meetings all the time, all over the state that are open to the general public without having lobbyists and state regulatory agencies hand picking the audience," Browne said. "But Gov. Walker is so concerned with the campaign optics of these events that he's unwilling to hear from the general public about what they really think about his failed agenda."

[...]

"Because of the importance of this discussion and the many people who would want to be included, she recommends that the event be open to the public," a Shilling staffer wrote in an email to the governor's office.

[...]

You can read the full article [here](#) .