

Former Aides Give Gov. Walker Re-Election Headache

Written by DGA Press, Melissa Miller
Thursday, 20 September 2018 12:05 -

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Three former Walker Cabinet secretaries, Corrections boss Ed Wall, Financial Services' Peter Bildsten, and Transportation's Mark Gottlieb have blasted the two-term Republican incumbent publicly.

MADISON, WI - A new report out from the Associated Press highlights a problem Governor Scott Walker's campaign is facing from an unusual source: former top members of his own administration. Not only have three former cabinet secretaries spoken out against Walker for putting politics ahead of what's best for Wisconsin, but even former GOP Governor Tommy Thompson has criticized Walker on criminal justice issues.

Read excerpts from the AP's reporting below or see the full story online [HERE](#) .

[Former aides give Wisconsin Gov. Walker re-election headache](#)

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — As Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker fights for his political life, some of the most devastating attacks aren't coming from Democrats. They're coming from a handful of former top officials from his own administration.

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Three former Walker Cabinet secretaries have blasted the two-term Republican incumbent publicly — not through anonymous editorials or off-the-record comments.



Former Corrections Secretary Ed Wall writes in a tell-all book that he was driven to the brink of suicide by the way Walker and others treated him. Former Financial Services Secretary Peter Bildsten said Walker was beholden to special interests and consumed by his political standing. And former Transportation Secretary Mark Gottlieb said Walker isn't telling the truth about road funding.

Even former Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson, long a supporter, distanced himself from Walker on prison overcrowding. Thompson said he regrets expanding the prison population as governor, even as Walker looks at building yet another prison and making his Democratic opponent's plan to reduce the number of inmates a campaign issue.

"I have never seen a situation like this where there seems to be a building insurrection for a governor running for re-election," said Dale Schultz, a former Republican state senator who spent 32 years in the Legislature. Schultz has been highly critical of Walker and other Republicans since retiring in 2015.

The criticism comes as polls show Walker is in a tight race with Democrat Tony Evers. Walker is seeking a third term after beating back a recall attempt in 2012 and a failed presidential bid in 2016. The race is being closely watched as a signal of GOP strength in Wisconsin after President Donald Trump put the state in the Republican column for the first time since 1984.

...Evers is rushing to capitalize on the family feuding. He has already cut two digital ads featuring Wall and Bildsten blasting Walker.

"I just think it is pretty powerful," said Democratic U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, a former state lawmaker who has sparred with Walker for years. "Usually if someone does it they're about to switch parties and run for office, or something self-serving. In this case, I don't see that. These are people who are just seeing a wrong direction for Wisconsin. ... Scott Walker's starting to make Donald Trump look competent."

... "People need to pay attention to what former administration people are saying," Wall said. "My purpose in writing the book is not grinding an ax but to tell the truth. ... There was a pattern of mistakes and dishonesty going on with this administration you should know about."

Bildsten once was such a Walker believer that he joked at Walker's first Cabinet meeting that he was going to tattoo Walker's promise to create 250,000 jobs on his shoulder. But Bildsten left in 2015 amid what he said was a dramatic shift away from doing what is best for the state toward doing what is best for Walker politically.

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"I became very frustrated with the influence of special interests," Bildsten said.

Bildsten, who is semi-retired, said he's voting for Evers.

Gottlieb was a Republican leader in the state Assembly before joining Walker's administration in 2011. He left in 2015 and recently said that Walker was "not truthful" and "increasingly inaccurate" in comments about transportation funding, another hot topic in the race.