

Wisconsin Senate Passes Republican Backwards Budget

Written by GBP Staff
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Republicans betray Wisconsinites by passing a \$73 billion 2015-17 State Budget that fails to invest in our traditional, shared values. The only winners are the special interests.

MADISON - The Republican-controlled Wisconsin Senate passed the \$73 billion 2015-17 State Budget bill just before midnight Tuesday, sending it to the Assembly after voting to repeal a prevailing wage law for local government projects.

The fight over the prevailing wage law, which sets a minimum salary for construction workers on public projects, had helped delay the budget for more than five weeks as Republicans tried to broker an agreement that could win passage in both houses.

The Senate also unanimously voted to repeal a gutting of the state open records law, changes added in a surprise 999 amendment by the GOP-controlled Joint Finance Committee last week. In the face of a swift and fierce bipartisan backlash over the move that would have exempted nearly all records created by state and local government officials, Gov. Scott Walker and legislative leaders backed off and the Senate voted 33-0 to remove the changes.

Removing those provisions was the only Democratic victory Tuesday.

Republicans hold a 19-14 majority in the Senate and rejected all other Democratic proposals, including reversing a \$250 million budget cut to the University of Wisconsin and increasing funding for public K-12 schools, during more than eight hours of debate.

The Assembly, where Republicans have a 63-36 majority, was scheduled to vote on the budget Wednesday night, a move that would send it to Gov. Scott Walker before he is to launch his presidential campaign Monday.

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Assembly Democratic legislators met the media today to discuss the day's Assembly calendar, most notably the state budget bill. It is unlikely they will have any more success than their Senate counterparts.



According to State Senator **Kathleen Vinehout** (D-Alma), "Budgets are all about choices. Unfortunately, the budget passed by the Senate majority party represents political choices, not the choices of Wisconsin families."

"People from across the state asked the Legislature to invest in public education, in the U.W. System, in roads and bridges, and in family supporting jobs. They asked legislators to protect the health programs and services for our vulnerable citizens," said Vinehout.

Senator **Jon Erpenbach** (D-Madison) pinned much of the blame on the Republican's allegiance to Walker's presidential ambitions.

"This budget spent over \$10 billion dollars more than the 2009-2011 budget. The problem with this budget was never a lack of cash. From day one, the problem has been that this budget is all about presidential politics and not about the priorities of the people of this state," Erpenbach said. "The decisions made today will have an effect on Wisconsin and I am afraid it will not be a good one."



Senator **Chris Larson** (D-Milwaukee) agreed, saying Senate Republicans forced through a special interest budget that surrenders to the demands of the most extreme Tea Party factions while making it harder for our neighbors in Wisconsin's middle class.

"Governor Walker has made it clear he places his own ambitions over ensuring financial

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security and prosperity for his own Wisconsin neighbors," said Larson.

"Tonight, Tea Party legislators again returned to their failed slash and burn policies that are bankrupting opportunity in our state and decimating our middle class," he continued. "It's like watching a bad rerun: the glamor is gone, the plot is predictable, the dialog is dated, and you're just left with bad actors stuck in the past. It's no wonder they tried to keep the public in the dark with their 999 secrecy motion."



This is the third budget since 2011. During that time Wisconsin has fallen to 35th for job creation and 50th for new businesses. Wisconsin has seen the biggest decline of its middle class of all 50 states.

By all accounts the GOP agenda of tax breaks for the rich and cuts to the services that help grow and sustain a strong middle class has failed.

The impact of this budget will be felt for years to come in the form of an economy that continues to lag our nation and places more pressure on already struggling families. The only winners are the special interests.

Senator **Dave Hansen** (D-Green Bay) concludes "This budget continues a pattern of giving yet millions more in tax breaks for the wealthy at the expense of our public schools and universities as well as our roads and highways."

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Senate Staffers Linda Kleinschmidt and Jay Wadd contributed to the article.