

Walker Delays Action on Reported Abuse & Neglect at Lincoln Hills

Written by Wisconsin Senate, Kate Constalie
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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/boy-in-doc-s5.jpg>



Governor announces no action will be taken for juvenile facility until at least 2019.

MADISON, WI – Days after former Corrections Secretary Ed Wall accused the Walker Administration of neglecting the Lincoln Hills juvenile corrections facility, Gov. Walker announced a hollow proposal that he does not intend to begin looking at until 2019. Years after reports of abuse and neglect at Lincoln Hills were brought to Gov. Walker’s attention, the state’s juvenile corrections facility continues to endanger the lives of youth and staff. According to media reports and court filings, Gov. Walker’s administration is failing to comply with a court order to improve security and make needed safety reforms at the northern Wisconsin campus.



“Gov. Walker refuses to help the people hurt by his policies unless it fits his political ambitions,” said Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling. “The timing of this announcement is so transparent and does nothing to address the immediate safety concerns for staff and youth. The counselors and youth need help, and the only person who is in a position to do anything refuses to step foot in the facility.”

Top Republican leaders have sought to downplay concerns at the facility and cover-up ongoing abuses. Gov. Walker’s administration recently shut down the internal affairs unit tasked with investigating problems at Lincoln Hills, despite the need to identify and fix ongoing problems. Citing court records, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that “Pepper spray was deployed 27 times in July and 36 times in August — up from 10 times in June,” and that a teacher was hospitalized October 11th after an assault left her badly injured.

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“Democratic leaders have been pushing for legislative action for years, and yet Republicans continue to stall proposals to improve safety and security concerns at Lincoln Hills,” Shilling added. “It is appalling that Gov. Walker is using the lives of staff and youth at the facility as stepping stones for his own political ambitions.”

Despite warning signs dating back to 2012, local officials continue to describe the conditions at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake as “inhumane.” Democrats have introduced a series of correction reform proposals to improve safety at these state facilities. The bills aim to improve worker training, limit the use of forced overtime, expand workplace safety rights, strengthen reporting requirements and ensure appropriate staffing levels for first responders.