

Republican Agenda in Madison Full of Misguided Priorities

Posted on Oct 08, Posted by [Gordon Hintz Press, Rep. 54th Assembly District](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



MADISON - In August, the Marquette University Law School poll showed 60 percent of voters in Wisconsin think Governor Walker "doesn't care about people like them". Based on the current Republican Legislature's priorities, it is not hard to understand why.

The Legislature's focus should always reflect challenges facing the people of our state. Based upon the Republicans' fall agenda, those issues are 1) disbanding the Government Accountability Board, Wisconsin's campaign finance and elections watchdog, 2) removing anti-corruption protections from civil service laws, and 3) criminalizing life-saving research that uses any cells derived from fetal tissue.

These self-serving power grabs and extreme ideology are not even on the radar of most Wisconsinites. Many of my constituents' most common challenges have to do with insecurity over future opportunity for themselves and their families. They ask me to address the real problems that make it hard for them to get ahead. Problems such as stagnant wages, the overwhelming cost of child care, and out-of-control student loan debt.

Wisconsin's job growth has lagged behind the nation over the past four and half years. To make things worse, many of the new jobs are in low wage positions. Low wages make it harder to afford housing, food, child care and higher education. Low wages also reduce consumer spending (one of the main drivers of the economy) and increase the need for government assistance.

Declining income is not a new or temporary problem in Wisconsin. But if many of our new jobs created are lower wage, it would make sense to consider a minimum wage increase. It has been six years since minimum wage earners got a raise in Wisconsin. Raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 would increase wages for over half a million Wisconsin workers, the average age of which is 35 years old. Yet as many other states take action, our Republican led

Legislature won't even hold a public hearing on a bill to gradually increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 over three years.

Another huge challenge for working families is affordable child care. The annual cost of infant care in Wisconsin is \$10,775. This is significant considering that a single mother's median income in Wisconsin is \$23,568, while a two-parent family is \$79,589. For families who depend on low and moderate-income jobs, the high cost of child care can wipe out their income to the point where it is cheaper just to stay home.

I am a co-sponsor of a bill that creates a tax credit for expenses for daycare services. Depending on income, the credit may be worth up to a maximum amount of \$3,000/year if there is one qualifying individual and up to \$6,000/year if there are two or more. This bill would make child care more affordable, allowing parents who want to get back to work to return to their jobs.

Student loan debt remains a massive obstacle for many former students and their families. The high cost of student loan debt has an impact on all of us. Wisconsin currently has over 800,000 people with outstanding student loan debt, which prevents many from buying a home or saving money for the future. There is a Democratic bill that would allow borrowers to refinance their student loans, providing some relief from this crushing debt. This should be a priority.

Many of the challenges facing people in our state do not have a simple answer. But these challenges deserve our attention and consideration. These issues should be priorities for our Legislature. Unfortunately, Republicans seem more interested in serving themselves than truly serving the public that elected them.

Tags: Untagged