

## Will Wisconsin Idea, Ethics Questions Follow Scott Walker on His Trip Overseas?

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Melissa Baldauff

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MADISON – In the wake of an embarrassing news cycle that saw Scott Walker roundly trashed for his plan to gut the Wisconsin Idea -- and for his ridiculous attempt to deflect blame for the proposal -- Walker today begins a taxpayer-funded trip to the United Kingdom, where Republican presidential candidates have historically fared poorly.

Most recently, fellow GOP governor and presidential hopeful Chris Christie drew negative headlines in London last week – a trip that’s been called a “train wreck” and a “disaster” as Christie fumbled a question on vaccines, came under scrutiny for his travel habits and a series of criminal corruption probes, and faced problems with his Republican caucus back home.

It’ll be déjà vu all over again as Walker visits the UK; with a criminal investigation still pending, Walker leaves Wisconsin amid criticism from Republicans, Democrats, and editorial boards all over the state on his budget plan that addresses a self-inflicted \$2.2 billion budget deficit with \$300 million in cuts from the University of Wisconsin System, a \$135 per pupil reduction in K-12 education spending over the biennium, and more than \$1 billion in new borrowing for road projects.

And questionable campaign travel is nothing new for Scott Walker either. As far back as 2004, Scott Walker was using taxpayer resources to fund his annual Harley ride across the state, an event touted by Walker as an opportunity to promote Milwaukee tourism, but was in fact an excuse for Walker to promote himself throughout the state. County staffers, including central John Doe figure Jim Villa, who has since served as a key advisor to Walker’s campaign and was recently given a six-figure job with the UW System, were involved in the promotion and planning of the event.

In his 2005 tour, just as Walker was beginning his first gubernatorial campaign, it was revealed that Walker gave away more than \$19,000 worth of free tickets to various Milwaukee-area attractions to members of the media, many of whom ultimately returned the freebies as ethical questions were raised about the giveaways. And in 2010, during his ultimately successful bid for governor, Walker moved the timing of the trip to coincide exactly not only with the date of the Republican Party’s state convention, but also to coincide with the site of the Republican convention, the Harley-Davidson Museum, where on May 21, 2010, the Republicans kicked off their annual convention.

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Inexplicably **accompanying Walker was Tim Russell**, who was released from prison late last month after completing his sentence on charges stemming from the first John Doe investigation, one of six top Walker associates convicted in the criminal probe. At the time of the 2010 ride, Russell served as the County's housing director. Any reasonable person would conclude that Housing has nothing to do with tourism – Russell's presence indicates that the ride was in fact illegal campaign activity.

"With his caucus in disarray, an avoidable gaffe still on everyone's mind, a budget crisis back home, and under a spotlight from a growing number of reporters who refuse to allow him to avoid questions he doesn't want to answer, Scott Walker finds himself in an unusual position on the defensive as he campaigns overseas," Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Mike Tate said Monday. "This trip might be a taxpayer-funded campaign to bolster his credibility on foreign policy, but the governor is still accountable for the mess he's created in Wisconsin. And unfortunately for Walker, overseas travel hasn't been too kind to scandal-plagued Republican governors running for president as of late."