

Wisconsin Republicans Left Behind to Defend Scott Walker's Attacks on Healthcare

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Melissa Baldauff

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/gb-listening-crowd-s5.jpg>



At budget listening sessions all over the state, Wisconsin legislators are getting an earful. To 27-year-old Jessica of Green Bay, Gov. Scott Walker's proposed \$68 billion state budget reads like a life sentence to a nursing home. "Who will profit from these changes – the for-profit insurance companies?" a mother in Rice Lake asks. Is Walker's presidential dream worth the pain here at home?

MADISON - At a series of listening sessions around the state, Wisconsinites are speaking out in opposition to Scott Walker's budget proposal that guts funding for critical healthcare programs like SeniorCare and IRIS, but with Scott Walker nowhere to be found as he campaigns for president all over the country, it's legislative Republicans who are left holding the bag.

Scott Walker's current budget, a document that does more for Iowa caucus voters than Wisconsin families, carries on his vision of gutting Wisconsin's successful SeniorCare program, which provides prescription drug assistance for thousands of low-income Wisconsin seniors. Under Walker's proposal, the program would lose \$15 million in state funding, or 40 percent, resulting in the loss of \$15 million in matching federal funds and \$66 million in program revenue, according to the Associated Press.

Walker's first budget proposed a \$20 million cut to the popular program, although the funding was restored after overwhelming pressure from Wisconsinites all over the state.

At a recent budget listening session in Door County, Republican legislators heard testimony from a constituent that the elimination of SeniorCare would triple her healthcare premiums, according to a report from the [Peninsula Pulse](#).

Also on the chopping block in Walker's budget is the IRIS program, short for "Include Respect, I Self-Direct," which helps the elderly and people with disabilities stay in their homes and direct their own care. The popular program has defenders across the state offering their testimony in its support.

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The [Green Bay Press Gazette](#) reports:

"To 27-year-old Jessica Nell of Green Bay, Gov. Scott Walker's proposed \$68 billion state budget reads like a life sentence to a nursing home.

"Nell, who uses a wheelchair, says the current state budget enables her to live independently, providing a stipend so she can employ an aide to help her with things she struggles to do: cooking, bathing, personal care. But the biennial spending proposal now being debated at the state level, she fears, would eliminate a program called IRIS — and with it, her ability to remain independent.

"'Families aren't going to be able to care for children who have significant needs,' said Nell, who has a master's degree and plans to be a social worker. 'I picture nursing homes filling up. But I'm only 27! Nursing homes aren't for people my age.'"

And Monday at a Joint Finance Committee budget listening session in Rice Lake, several northern Wisconsin residents offered testimony in opposition to Walker's cuts to public health programs.

The [Star News](#) reports:

"'Who will profit from these changes — the for-profit insurance companies,' said the mother of a [sic] autistic 19-year-old. She noted that with families having the budget ability means that many do not spend the amount allocated which presents a significant savings in state Medicaid costs. 'These need to be brought out of budget and taken into committee,' said Pamela Goodman, director of Indianhead Community Action Agency.

"'Those who are going to suffer are those who are most vulnerable,' said Keith Anderson of the Barron County Board of Aging."

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The final Joint Finance Committee budget listening session is tomorrow, March 26th, in Reedsburg. Democrats and Republicans in the legislature will hold additional listening sessions around the state through at least April 11th.

“As his Republican legislature is quickly finding out at listening sessions all over the state, Scott Walker’s budget is indefensible,” Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Mike Tate said Wednesday. “Even if improvements are made, and I certainly hope there are, this budget is terrible for working Wisconsin families and Wisconsin Republicans are going to be held responsible for it. Scott Walker might be the author of the budget, but his lockstep Republican legislature paved the way for him to propose these radical attacks on Wisconsin’s middle class unchecked.”