

Walker Must Release 'Wisconsin Idea' Change Records

Written by GBP Staff

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/walker-sign-budget3-s5.jpg>



CMD wins judgement last Friday. Governor's efforts to hide public records about his role in trying to delete "the search for truth" and the Wisconsin Idea from the UW's mission statement rejected.

MADISON - Gov. Scott Walker's administration must release most records related to proposed changes to the University of Wisconsin System's mission statement, a judge here ruled Friday.

Dane County Circuit Judge Amy Smith, in ruling against Walker, resoundingly rejected the Governor's elaborate efforts to hide public records about his role in trying to delete "the search for truth" and the Wisconsin Idea from the UW's mission statement.

His effort to throw a cloak of secrecy over a wide range of decision making under the guise of protecting government "deliberations" from public view was also repudiated.

Last May, the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) filed a lawsuit against Walker for unlawfully withholding public records about his office's alteration of the mission, and it took more than a year of hard work by them to get the truth.

It was CMD that broke the story that Walker's executive budget bill struck this language and more from the University's mission, inserting in its stead an almost soviet command to create workers that "meet the state's workforce needs."

The documents show that far from being an inadvertent "drafting error," his office was "the driving force" behind the edits.

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Moreover, when university officials saw that the Governor was taking an ax to the statement, they asked him to change his mind.

"The Legislature has been credited with crafting careful and wonderfully descriptive language to create the System. The language is frequently quoted. If the purpose of the System is largely unchanged, this language should remain unchanged as well," they wrote.

But Walker's office refused.

Smith ruled Friday that Walker wrongly withheld 12 email exchanges and six attachments, but that three attachments were properly withheld. But for the majority of the material, Smith said that Walker's concerns over releasing the records did not outweigh the public's interest in disclosure.

"Wisconsin Open Records Law has long-held that the public interest in disclosure -- the right of the people of Wisconsin to know what their government is doing -- is a strong presumption for every record," Smith wrote.

You can see the ruling [here](#) and you can see the withheld records [here](#).

CMD writers Lisa Graves and Mary Bottari contributed to this report.

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