

## Republican Legislators Cannot Divorce Themselves from Walker's Harmful Budget

Written by Wisconsin Assembly Democrats  
Thursday, 26 March 2015 10:48 -

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MADISON - While Republican legislators may claim to soften the blow of Gov. Walker's harmful state budget, they cannot divorce themselves from this disastrous budget and our state's economic mess. Republicans lit our fiscal house on fire and they should not be applauded for running back into that house and rescuing just a few of the many Wisconsin treasures at risk.

Assembly Democrats stand ready to focus on the issues that really matter in our state – creating economic opportunity, strengthening our communities, providing opportunities for our children to succeed and standing up for the freedoms of all Wisconsinites.

We must recognize two vital facts. First, our nation is in a time of relative prosperity with the best national job numbers since the 1990s. Second, most of our neighboring states have strong surpluses while Wisconsin has a \$2.2 billion structural deficit.

This is the third straight Republican budget that puts right-wing special interest giveaways and extreme conservative ideology above the needs of the citizens of this state. Wisconsin is 40th in the nation in job growth, experiencing the worst middle-class decline in the country, and facing a massive deficit because of deliberate choices made by Gov. Walker and his Republican legislative partners.

Wisconsin's budget deficit is a self-inflicted wound caused by Republican policies over the past five years. Our state's fiscal woes can largely be traced to three major policy decisions: Republicans turning away federal health care dollars, a massive tax giveaway to a small number of favored corporations, and a budget maneuver that gave wealthy families 13 times the break given to middle-class families.

These policies have cost our state dearly.

Rejecting federal health care dollars is costing Wisconsin more than \$150 million a year and sending our hard-earned tax dollars to cover patients not here in Wisconsin, but in Minnesota,

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Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and many other states.

Instead of targeting tax relief to the middle class, Republicans squandered our temporary surplus on very expensive tax giveaways that largely aided the super-wealthy. The last Republican budget gave people making \$300,000 or more over 13 times the tax break it gave to the average working family making around \$50,000 a year.

Under the current Republican budget proposal, the American Dream will be farther out of reach for the middle class and those striving to get there. This budget slashes the University of Wisconsin System, makes another round of devastating cuts to our K-12 schools while allowing unlimited taxpayer money to be transferred to private schools, tramples our state's conservation history by effectively ending our bipartisan Stewardship program, and continues to harm Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens by destabilizing Family Care and IRIS and slashing SeniorCare.

We are not going to stand silently by while Republicans dismantle our state's key values. Democrats will once again offer responsible alternatives and a more balanced approach to budgeting that preserves our education and job training opportunities, invests in SeniorCare and strengthens other vital services in a way that is fiscally prudent.

Wisconsin deserves better than this budget. And the people of the state deserve better than Republican legislators who try to posture themselves as heroes in a crisis that they created through their irresponsible and deliberate policy choices.

I encourage all citizens to contact lawmakers, the Joint Finance Committee and the Governor to voice your opinion and let Republicans know that we need meaningful changes and that a few modest changes won't get them off the hook for this budget disaster.

By Rep. Peter Barca  
Assembly Democratic Leader