

State of the State - 'nothing more than Band-Aid proposals'

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MADISON - During his speech tonight, Governor Walker offered nothing more than Band-Aid proposals that are anemic and weak compared to the significant challenges we face.

The numbers are staggering.

In 2015, roughly 10,000 hardworking Wisconsinites received layoff notices, the highest single-year total since the governor took office. Wisconsin still ranks in the bottom third for job growth and worst in the Midwest, and our middle class is shrinking faster than any other state. We rank third-worst for student loan debt and our roads are also third-worst in the nation. And Republicans have cut \$1 billion from public K-12 schools since 2010.

Wisconsin should be a leader; however, under Republicans we are falling behind. When I travel the state I hear people say we should invest in our public schools, level the playing field for the middle class, promote good-paying jobs and invest in our roads and bridges.

The truth is the State of our State is being neglected by Republicans putting their own needs above the needs of everyday Wisconsinites.

Last year, legislative Republicans turned their backs on Wisconsin's interests in order to help Governor Walker in his failed run for president.

The Republican agenda included:

- Shifting \$800 million from public schools to unaccountable private voucher schools over the next decade;
- A quarter billion dollar cut to our world-class university system;
- Driving down wages for hardworking families;
- And rejecting federal funding that would have meant health care coverage for tens of thousands more of our citizens.

This past fall, Republicans opened Wisconsin for corruption with an agenda designed to consolidate their own power and enrich the special interest groups bankrolling their campaigns. Perhaps most egregious was their late-night, secretive effort to dismantle our open records laws so they could hide their actions from the public.

It is clear after that Republicans cannot be trusted to do the right thing for the people of Wisconsin.

The difference between Democrats and Republicans at this juncture could not be clearer. My Democratic colleagues and I have made growing our economy and rebuilding the middle class our top priorities.

Our "Economic Opportunity Agenda" would help create good-paying jobs, close the skills gap by connecting workers with available jobs, increase wages and make us more competitive in a global economy. Our "Bring Back the Middle Class" package would boost retirement security

and provide relief from high child-care costs and student debt.

Today alone on the Assembly floor, Democrats voted for proposals that would ensure significant investments in our public schools and affordable health care coverage for tens of thousands of Wisconsinites that, incidentally, would save Wisconsin taxpayers more than \$300 million over the next two years. Democrats also voted for much-needed relief for more than a million student loan borrowers and equal pay protections for women in the workplace.

Sadly, Republicans rejected every single one of these bills.

Yet even in the face of Republicans' inaction on these important issues and their betrayal of your trust and your interests, I believe the State of the People of Wisconsin is resilient.

I am inspired every day by the hardworking men and women who make up the fabric of our state. Wisconsin is in need of bold action for our workers and middle-class families and Democrats are ready to lead.

As Republicans continue to stack the deck against ordinary Wisconsinites and obscure their harmful agenda with election-year distractions, Democrats are focused on leveling the playing field and rebuilding the middle class the Republican agenda has hurt so deeply.

You can trust Democrats to restore opportunity and grow wages for ordinary, hardworking people.

You can trust Democrats to work to rebuild a strong middle class.

You can trust Democrats to grow an economy that works for everyone, not just a privileged few.

While legislative Republicans pursue an agenda focused on helping special interests and their own self-interests, legislative Democrats will continue to advocate for the people's agenda in 2016 and beyond – but we need your help.

One of the proudest moments of 2015 was when you rose up and demanded the Republicans end their assault on open records. Your hard work and advocacy forced Republicans to back down, and you can do it again.

I encourage you to talk to your neighbors, friends and families about the direction our state is headed. Become engaged and make your voice heard. Together, we can put Wisconsin back on the right track and make sure the State of our State is stronger for all our citizens.

Thank you for watching, and as always, my fellow Wisconsinites, Forward!

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