



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 23, 2011

## Wisconsin Teachers, Doctors Caught Lying Could Face Trouble

As Wisconsin private-sector workers went to work and paid their taxes last week, thousands of government-school teachers lied and called in sick so they could attend protests in Madison against Gov. Scott Walker's proposal to rein in the state's multi-billion-dollar budget deficit.

In addition to the lying educators, more than a few doctors at the demonstrations were caught on video handing out bogus excuses to whomever asked. And now, the people of Wisconsin and their officials want answers for what critics are referring to as outright "fraud."



So many teachers skipped school to attend the protests that numerous schools across the state were actually forced to shut down for several days. Estimates on the cost of the teachers' absences range from \$6 million on the low end, to almost \$10 million on the higher side. Parents, who generally still had to report for work despite the turmoil, were left scrambling to find something to do with their children as schools closed down.

The missing educators sparked a furor among Wisconsinites and commentators, many of whom are calling for serious consequences. Some are even [pushing to have the teachers fired](#), though union contracts would probably not allow that.

Conservative columnist Michelle Malkin [suggested](#) docking their pay. "Turn in a fake doctor's note ... receive a rubber paycheck in return," she wrote. "Monopoly money will do, too. If these union heavies want to play games with families' lives, they should reap the consequences to their own bank accounts." Malkin said recent events were a "perfect illustration" of Democrat Party values: "Educational malpractice. Medical malpractice. Economic malpractice."

Noting that teachers are supposed to be role models for their students, *Washington Post* columnist Esther Cepeda blasted the example they were setting. "The teachers were cheese-brained for walking out of work, denying schooling for four days to the very students they profess to care so much about — even after the head of the state's largest teacher's union, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, asked them to return to their classrooms," the former teacher charged in the piece, entitled "[No apple for Wisconsin's teachers](#)."

And perhaps due to the outrage, at least some school districts have now promised to investigate. According to [news reports](#), school officials in the Madison and Milwaukee school districts intend to verify all sick notes handed in during the relevant period. "There's no rubber stamp," a spokeswoman for the Milwaukee Public Schools [told](#) the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, noting that the excuse slips would be sent to the human resources department for review.

To see some of the teachers admitting they lied, watch the video below:



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At least four separate doctors were caught writing bogus notes to cover for the lying teachers. One doctor shown on camera by a local Fox News affiliate was walking around carrying a big sign reading “I’m a doctor — need a note?” Another had a similar placard, reading: “I’m a Dr. — need a work note?”

The Wisconsin-based MacIver News Service also caught several doctors on tape. Watch the video below:

But the medical personnel who wrote the fake excuses could be in hot water, too. Both the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and the Wisconsin Medical Society vowed to investigate. “If these reports are accurate, the Society does not condone these actions under any circumstances,” the Wisconsin Medical Society said on Monday, noting that it had started to investigate the action during the weekend.

The University was even more blunt. “These UW Health physicians were acting on their own and without the knowledge or approval of UW Health. These charges are very serious,” the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and the University of Wisconsin Medical Foundation [said](#) in a statement, noting that they “immediately launched an investigation of the reported behavior.”

According to the statement, the investigation will work to identify “which physicians were involved and whether their behavior constituted violations of medical ethics or University of Wisconsin and UW Health policies and work rules.” Any disciplinary action taken will follow the University’s “established procedures.” And since it is a “personnel matter,” it will not be public information, the statement said.

Of course, after being caught, some of the doctors tried to justify their actions. “Some people think it’s a nod-and-a-wink thing but it’s not,” University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Doctor Lou Sanner told the Associated Press. “One of the biggest stresses in life is the threat of loss of income, loss of job, loss of health insurance. People have actually been getting ill from this, or they can’t sleep.” Sanner admitted to writing hundreds of medical-absence excuses.

But prominent voices in the field aren’t buying it. “When all’s said and done, it’s really the profession of medicine that has the black eye in this case,” Arthur Derse, the director of the Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the Medical College of Wisconsin, [told The Atlantic](#) after seeing the videos of doctors writing fake notes.

While analysts and media commentators call for the teachers who lied to be fired or at least punished, others are hoping the doctors who engaged in fraud by writing the fake notes will lose their medical licenses. Whether there will be consequences remains to be seen, but the anger over the lies is growing as awareness continues to build.

*Thumbnail photo: teachers protest at the State Capitol in Madison, Wis.: AP Images*

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