



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 23, 2011

Indiana Democrats Join Wisconsin Comrades In Illinois

Following the lead of their comrades in Wisconsin, leftist Democrats in Indiana's legislature, beholden to the state's powerful unions, have fled the state to stop consideration of budget cuts and right-to-work legislation they don't like.

Like Wisconsin's Gov. Scott Walker, Indiana's [Gov. Mitch Daniels](#) and his GOP cohort in the state legislature are pushing legislation the unions don't like. In Indiana, House Bill 1468 [would forbid](#) employers from requiring employees to join unions as a condition of working. HB 1468:



makes it a Class A misdemeanor for an employer to require an individual to: (1) become or remain a member of a labor organization; (2) pay dues, fees, or other charges to a labor organization; or (3) pay to a charity or another third party an amount that represents dues, fees, or other charges required of members of a labor organization; as a condition of employment or continuation of employment. Establishes a separate private right of action for violations or threatened violations. Exempts individuals employed in the construction industry, employed by the United States, or subject to the federal Railway Labor Act.

Leftists are also worried about a bill that passed the state Senate early this week that, among other things, limits collective bargaining for teachers to wages and benefits. [Senate Bill 575](#):

provides that an agreement may not extend beyond the end of a state budget biennium. Prohibits certain subjects from being bargained collectively, and provides that prohibited subjects and items that lead to deficit financing may not be included in an agreement. Removes certain items from the list of discussion subjects between a school employer and an exclusive representative.

Another initiative [that upsets](#) the Democrats would give parents vouchers to send their children to private schools.

Unsurprisingly, limiting the power of the teachers unions sent Democrats and their pedagogical allies into a rage. Rather than respect the democratic procedures and fight fairly on the floor on the Indiana House, Democrats [ran for the bushes](#), offering this explanation:

"By staying here [in Illinois] we will be giving the people of Indiana a chance to find out more about this radical [GOP] agenda and speak out against it, the Democrats said. "We will remain here until we get assurances from the governor and House Speaker Brian Bosma that these bills will not be called down in the House at any time this session."

They [are hiding](#) in Urbana, Illinois.

Gov. Daniels said he believes they will return when the right-to-work is dead. He added that he is opposed to introducing the legislation at this time.

Daniels, whose name [is bandied](#) about as possible presidential contender, did not send the state police



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to round up the Democrats, although he had the legal right to do so.

Wisconsin Democrats Still Fighting

In Wisconsin, leftists are still fighting [Gov. Scott Walkers](#) attempt to get control of the biennial budget and its [\\$3.6 billion deficit](#). Democrats fled the state, and protesters have swarmed the capitol.

Walker, who [is threatening](#) layoffs if the Democrats don't surrender, wants state workers to begin contributing to their pensions and to pay a larger share of their health insurance. His proposal also would limit collective bargaining for public employees to wages, and then require employees to contribute 5.8 percent of their pay to pensions and pay 12.6 percent of their health insurance costs.

But Wisconsin Democratic House members, [who fled](#) the state last week, [are still](#) on the lam hiding in Illinois as well.

Though unions and their Democrat allies portray Walkers proposal bill as a stern measure shafting underpaid employees, an analysis shows that some of the employees complaining loudest make more than workers in the private sector.

[Reported The Daily Caller:](#)

Wisconsin's 2010 Teacher of the Year, Leah Lechleiter-Luke of Mauston High School, [told CNN](#) the budget changes would force her to look for additional part-time work.

When people say that public sector employees live high off the hog, I'd like to share that for 13 of my 19-year teaching career I have held a part-time job either in the summer or teaching night class at the local technical college, Lechleiter-Luke told CNN. In addition to tightening the belt even more and crossing our fingers that nothing breaks, I will need to find part-time work again.

Lechleiter-Luke makes \$54,928 in base salary and \$32,213 in fringe benefits, which include health insurance, life insurance and retirement pay.

Brad Lutes and his wife, Heather Lutes, [told MSNBC's Ed Schultz](#) that Walkers budget would hit them twice as hard.

Having to explain to an 8- and 10-year old that the governor of your state basically wants to take money away from dad and mom? It's just really, really frustrating, Brad Lutes told Schultz.

He makes \$49,412 in base salary with \$27,987 in fringe benefits and his wife makes \$50,240 with \$9,413 in benefits. That's \$137,052 annually between the two of them.

Per the Department of Commerce, in 2009, the average personal income for all Wisconsin workers was \$37,398.

[The DC](#) cited three other teachers who earn more than twice the salary of the average worker if benefits are included. One earns \$62,877 in base salary with an additional \$26,492 in benefits, another earns \$48,406 in base salary and \$37,600 in benefits, while a third earns \$58,976 in annual salary with an additional \$25,646 in benefits.

One of those teachers, then, earns more in benefits than most Wisconsin workers do in salary.

Photo: Protestors hold up signs outside the Indiana House chambers at the Statehouse in Indianapolis, Feb. 23, 2011.: AP Images



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