



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 17, 2011

Recall Drive Officially Launched Against Wisc. Governor

It has been all the talk on Wisconsin political blogs, talk shows, and editorial pages for the past several months. Now it is official: on November 15 virulent opponents of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker (left) officially launched a recall drive against him, in what can only be described as a vindictive attempt at political payback for his success at reining in collective bargaining for state employees. But just who Democrats will choose to run against the popular conservative state leader — should they garner the half a million or so needed recall petition signatures — is still up in the air.



While Walker had to have been in office at least a year before a recall challenge was mounted, Democrats had reportedly been busily planning with union leaders and other strategists on how to mobilize quickly in mid-November to begin gathering the more than 540,000 signatures they would need to collect by January 17 in order to force a recall election. If their effort is successful, it would mark only the third time in U.S. history that a recall election has been held for state governor. Previously only North Dakota and California had recalled their governors, in both cases defeating the seated candidate.

The Milwaukee [Journal-Sentinel](#) newspaper explained the process: Once the signatures are filed, the accountability board under state law would have 31 days until Feb. 17 to review the petitions. If the board found enough valid signatures had been filed, it would call for an election on March 27. That election would become a primary if more than two members of any party ran, creating a general recall election on April 24.

In response to the recall drumbeat, Walkers own team filed paperwork in early November for a theoretical recall effort against him, a move that allows the governor to accept unlimited campaign donations. According to Milwaukee radio station [WISN](#), Campaign finance rules set a cap at \$10,000 on campaign donations, but a quirk in state law allows candidates in office to receive unlimited donations while recall organizers gather signatures against them. The person running against Walker would have to abide by campaign finance rules.

If the recall is successful and an election is called, reported WISN, experts said it will likely break fundraising records. Mike McCabe, head of a nonpartisan group that tracks political spending, said about \$44 million was forked over in the nine state Senate recall races this summer. McCabe predicted a statewide race will dwarf that, with spending by candidates and outside groups topping \$100 million. Meanwhile, said a Wisconsin Republican Party spokesperson, the governor remains completely focused on the task at hand saving taxpayer dollars and creating a business friendly climate so Wisconsinites can get back to work.

According to the [Journal-Sentinel](#), the Walker campaign has already begun airing ads across the state, most notably during a recent Monday night televised football game between the Green Bay Packers and



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the Minnesota Vikings. The ad features recently elected Waukesha School Board member Karin Sue Rajnicek praising Walkers education reforms reported the *Journal-Sentinel*, with Rajnicek telling the TV audience: We were worried when the state budget meant there was going to be less money for our school district, and we have 25 schools. But Gov. Walker gave us options that reduced our biggest costs so that we could put more money back into our classrooms.

Although the state Democratic Party has yet to offer a potential candidate who could challenge Walker, Democratic Party strategist Sachin Cheda was optimistic about the chances of success, telling the [Associated Press](#): I think people really do, at some level, believe a rocking chair with nobody sitting in it would be a better governor than Scott Walker. Similarly, Marty Beil, head of the 23,000-member Wisconsin State Employees Union, said that if they can swing the petition signatures, the right Walker opponent will appear. I believe that we get the signatures, then we get the candidate, Beil said.

Among the Democratic notables who may be willing to run the expected uphill campaign against Walker are former U.S. Representative Dave Obey, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, and state Senator Jon Erpenbach, one of the more than dozen state lawmakers who fled to Illinois in an unsuccessful effort to prevent a vote on Walkers collective bargaining bill.

Two high-profile Democrats who have been singled out by strategists as ideal Walker opponents are the states long-time U.S. Senators: Herb Kohl, who is set to retire in 2012 after two decades in office; and Russ Feingold, who served the state in Washington for 18 years before his defeat in the 2010 election by Republican challenger Ron Johnson.

While Obey, who was a liberal stalwart in the U.S. Congress for nearly 42 years, said he would prefer to see someone such as Kohl or Barrett run against Walker, he told AP that he has not ruled out running himself, and would decide when the time comes. Right now, my main purpose is to try to convince one of them to run and see to it that people remember theres a huge amount at stake and we cannot afford to have the opposition to the governor split in different directions. He emphasized that, to Democrats, the issue is Scott Walker. The issue is not candidate A or candidate B.

Walker certainly isnt the only Republican politician targeted in the backlash over efforts to gain control over runaway state spending. As the Associated Press reported, even before passage, Walkers plan sparked weeks of protests that drew tens of thousands of people to the state Capitol, and two Republican state senators who supported it were ousted in recalls last summer. Seven other lawmakers targeted for their support or opposition of the law survived recall elections.

In addition, recall efforts were launched against three additional GOP state senators on November 15, and a fourth, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, said he expected a recall effort against himself as well. He warned that the campaigns would have a negative impact the progress of Walkers promised reforms. Im disappointed because I know what its going to do to this chamber, he said of the state Senate. Its going to throw it back in political mode.



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