



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 22, 2011

## Tea Party Shows Support for Wis. Gov. Walker, Reforms

Organized in part by American Majority and other groups, the conservative rally went under the banner "[I Stand with Walker](#)." A line-up of several nationally known conservative leaders spoke to the assembled activists. Among them were "Joe the Plumber," conservative news-media boss Andrew Breitbart, and potential presidential candidate and former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain. Cain [told](#) the cheering crowd,



Over the last couple of days, America has heard from the ten percent of the workforce that now has a chance to hear from the 90 percent of the workforce. And let me tell you something about the 90 percent of the workforce that maybe the ten percent have forgotten: We pay the bills!

Cain, wearing a black cowboy hat, declared that the people of Wisconsin had elected Gov. Walker to lead, "and he is leading." And after blaming high government spending for lost jobs and businesses, Cain suggested Wisconsin was "ground zero for taking back our nation one state at a time." The crowd cheered wildly. Finally, Cain said the state was on the verge of bankruptcy and that Gov. Walker was attempting to prevent a total disaster — being "dead broke."

Andrew Breitbart, who runs the conservative news website [breitbart.com](#) and others like it, complained that teachers were calling in sick when they were not, in order to protest against the reforms. "What kind of lesson" does it teach the children that their instructors were "willing to lie," he wondered.

Executive Director Tim Phillips of the free-market activist group Americans for Prosperity, which also [helped organize the rally](#), spoke as well. "We are going to win," he [told](#) the crowd. "We are going to win our nation and our values." The group has collected more than 55,000 signatures so far on a petition supporting Gov. Walker.

Telling the audience that "the eyes of the entire nation are on you today," Phillips said America was undergoing a "revolution" of "fiscal sanity." He also led the activists in chanting "do your job," referring to runaway State Senate Democrats who fled Wisconsin in an effort to prevent a vote on Gov. Walker's proposed reforms.

Many anti-Walker protesters were also at the capitol during the tea party rally. Though some intense exchanges took place between them and tea partiers (sometimes nose to nose), physical violence did not break out and police reported there were no arrests that day. "If the eyes of the nation and the world are truly upon us, then I think we've been able to show that democracy can work well, even if those who have passionate views on different sides come together," Madison police spokesman Joel DeSpain [told](#) the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.



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During the controversy, however, some anti-Walker protesters have been expressing their "passionate views" via [violent rhetoric](#) and [signage](#), suggesting that physical violence is a very real possibility.

Estimates of the crowd size on Saturday varied widely, but there were at least tens of thousands of people around the capitol and several thousand Tea Party activists. One speaker at the pro-Walker rally said there were 10,000 people at the rally, while officials [cited](#) in news reports estimated the overall crowd around the capitol (both pro- and anti-Walker) at about 60,000.

On a number of occasions, the Tea Partiers chanted "pass the bill, pass the bill." They carried flags and signs in support of Gov. Walker and his proposed reforms — some humorous, other straight and to the point. Meanwhile, anti-Walker demonstrators marched around the capitol building banging drums and shouting "kill the bill, kill the bill," among other slogans.

The *Wall Street Journal*, in a piece headlined "[Wisconsin Protest Becomes Proxy Fight for Washington](#)," noted that national-level politicians including President Barack Obama and House Speaker John Boehner had [already spoken out](#) regarding the situation in the state. The paper said the battle raging in Madison was somewhat of a microcosm for what will soon play out at the federal level and in states across the nation.

Plans for a larger, nationwide rally in support of Gov. Walker are [already underway](#) for later in the week. The non-profit American Majority, through the website [www.istandwithwalker.com](http://www.istandwithwalker.com), is "calling for a national demonstration of support for Scott Walker and leaders across the country who have the courage to fight the public sector union bosses — on Wednesday, February 23rd," the group's President, Ned Ryun, [said](#) in a statement. "This is the moment and opportunity for the tea partiers, and those who want limited government and support the free market, to stand firm against the greed and dangerous statist philosophy of the public sector unions."

The call to action urged activists to host or attend a rally or candlelight vigil in support of Walker, Wisconsin legislators, and others like them. Another option was writing a blog post or an op-ed on the issue. Finally, Ryun asked activists to update their Facebook statuses and use the Twitter social-networking service to show their support of Gov. Walker and his policies. "We must show our politicians that we can make just as much noise when they are doing the right things as well," Ryun said. "Now is the time to fight."

Gov. Walker has [said](#) he will not be intimidated by the government-union protestors and that he intends to continue pushing the reforms. State Senate Democrats, meanwhile, have [vowed](#) to stay out of Wisconsin and prevent a vote on the proposals until Republicans are willing to compromise. Teachers who forced some schools to shut down by skipping work are expected to return to their posts by early this week, but more protests are likely coming as the battle [spreads](#) to other states.

*Photo: AP Images*

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