



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 8, 2011

WI Teacher Reprimanded for Enabling Students' Protest Against Governor

An elementary school field trip to the Wisconsin State Capitol got out of hand when the teacher allowed his fourth-grade students to participate in a protest against embattled Governor Scott Walker, the current target of the state's public school teachers' unions. A video of the incident, obtained by a Milwaukee Fox News affiliate, shows students clapping along while protesters sing a modified version of the Woody Guthrie folk song, "This Land Is Your Land," with a verse that includes the incendiary line, "Scott Walker will never push us out, this house was made for you and me."



As shown on an [expanded Fox video](#), the students got pulled into a daily noontime protest featuring a group called the Solidarity Singers — which for the past nine months has been part of a protest that has morphed into a recall effort against the Republican Governor who has instituted a number of measures which have enraged state employees — particularly the heavily union-controlled public school teachers. ([Click here to watch the video.](#))

Reported [Fox](#):

Every weekday at noon, the "Solidarity Singers" gather around the Capitol Rotunda to vocalize their displeasure with Governor Walker's agenda.... From traditional protest songs that date back generations, to other popular tunes with a clever change in lyrics, it is a peaceful protest, with an unmistakably political message. "We want to sing in the Capitol the day after Walker is no longer working in this building," Solidarity Song Leader Chris Reeder said.

Reeder noted that the fourth-graders from Portage were not the first school kids to wander into the middle of the liberal mêlée. "When they are here," he said of school children, "we do try to sing 'This Land Is Your Land' or 'If I Had A Hammer,' things they might be familiar with that are a little less political, so they would feel welcome to come into the circle."

However, Reeder and company made no efforts to expunge from their "less political" songs the rewritten parts that were disrespectful toward the students' Governor. As they sang, the students' teacher stood passively by, observing the scene.

According to Fox News, the superintendent of the Portage School District, Charles Poches, insisted that the teacher, who is employed at John Muir Elementary School, was naïve and somehow did not realize that the raucous gathering was a political protest. Nonetheless, the district placed a letter of reprimand in the teacher's employment file. Meanwhile, the teacher said he was "embarrassed" by the incident but insisted he "did not do anything wrong."

The incident occurred several weeks before being reported by Fox News, and, according to the [Portage](#)



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[Daily Register](#) newspaper, “Poches said he did not address the students’ singing earlier because he did not learn of it until a TV reporter questioned him.” Explained the administrator: “The district addressed the situation as soon as we were notified. The problem was we were not notified until Fox 6 contacted us.” He added that there was “never any intent from the district of hiding something. It’s just we were never notified of the incident because most people didn’t think it was an incident.” The local newspaper reported that the school district addressed the issue in a letter sent to parents of fourth graders in the district, and the matter quickly died.

However, Wisconsin politicians from both major parties were able to make some useful hay of the incident, with Democratic State Senator Mark Miller insisting that the gathering of state employees and their supporters was nothing more than an “exercise in free speech, and they’re doing it in a respectful way.”

As to the respectability of inviting impressionable kids into a divisive and emotionally charged demonstration of grievance against state government at work, Republican State Representative Steve Nass called the incident “despicable,” with fellow GOP Assemblyman Robin Voss adding, “School children should not be a part of any political protest.”



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