



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 20, 2014

Relying on a Pizza Ad to End Scott Walker's Governorship in Wisconsin

On September 18, 2014, a [new TV campaign ad](#) supporting Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's reelection bid showed the governor smiling into the camera and saying, "Thanks to our reforms, the average family will have an extra \$322 to spend. What are you going to do with your savings?" A number of regular folks then answered: gas up the car, put on new tires, and buy things such as clothes, school supplies, and diapers.



PolitiFact.com looked into Walker's claims and concluded that he was basically right: The income tax and property tax reductions that he had engineered during his first term would save the average family in Wisconsin somewhere between \$330 and \$350 a year. Said PolitiFact: "Either way, the figures support [Walker's] ad's claim of \$322."

Mary Burke, a member of Madison's school board and Wisconsin's former secretary of commerce from 2005 through 2007, decided not to try to refute Walker's claim but instead to belittle it. Now gaining notoriety nationally is her "[pizza ad](#)," which claims that the average family would receive only \$11 per month in tax benefits while corporations would enjoy more than \$600 million in tax breaks, and millionaires would save more than \$1,400 a year. The ad ends: "Scott Walker: millions for them, pizza for you."

Although PolitiFact.com rated Burke's ad as only "half true" because critical information, such as the fact that Walker instituted across-the-board tax cuts — in contrast to Burke's claim that Walker raised taxes on 140,000 families — was left out, the ad just might have enough clout to close the electoral gap that, according to most polls, has been steadily diminishing since May.

Back in May that gap was more than seven percent in favor of Walker, reflecting the same percentage by which he defeated his opponent in 2010 and survived the recall effort in 2012. Objective observers at the time essentially wrote off Burke because Walker's conservative economic policies were beginning to kick in. He installed a controversial budget repair plan which not only made more than \$1 billion in cuts to the state's budget but also cut income and property taxes as well. This was necessary to overcome the state's \$3 billion budget shortfall that he inherited in January 2011. Coupled with \$2 billion in tax cuts, Walker infuriated the unions with a bill that emasculated their ability to collect union dues from teachers who didn't want to be a part of the union.

Just 10 months after his inauguration, efforts to recall him began, culminating in a recall election in June 2012, which he survived by a 52 to 46 margin. In that election he beat the same Democrat opponent, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, whom he had defeated by nearly the same margin back in 2010 — 53 to 46.

Walker predicted that the tax cuts would close the budget gap and produce a surplus while stimulating the state's economy. His campaign is making much of the fact that Wisconsin ended last year with nearly a half a billion dollars in surplus while improving the state's economic ranking in the nation. In



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another ad Walker stated: “Wisconsin ranks 11th in the nation in total business establishment growth compared to 47th in the years Mary Burke was Commerce Secretary.”

When PolitiFact.com looked into that claim, they found it to be “on solid ground.”

Also appearing on the surface to be working to Walker’s advantage is the fact that teachers for the last three years have been opting out of union participation, thanks to his Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, also known as Act 10. Since June 2011, teacher enrollment in Wisconsin’s Education Association Council has dropped by a third while enrollment in the smaller AFT-Wisconsin has been cut in half.

And yet, when pollsters at Real Clear Politics (RCP) looked at the Walker v. Burke campaign on Sunday, they were astonished to see how close the race appears to be. After his election in 2011, wrote RCP:

Walker proceeded to pursue a solidly conservative agenda, resulting in a series of attempts to weaken his governorship.

First, progressives attempted to defeat a conservative Supreme Court justice. Then they attempted to recall enough state senators to capture that body. Finally, they attempted to recall Walker himself.

However, these efforts failed.

Given this, we’d expect to see Walker in relatively good shape. But this doesn’t seem to be the case. He maintains a narrow lead over Madison school board member Mary Burke.

With undecideds in the Wisconsin governorship race at only four percent, Burke’s clever “pizza ad” just may be enough to end Walker’s career as governor — if Wisconsin voters forget that Burke will work to raise their taxes and fees and that the turnaround from the Walker administration would likely make them much more than \$312 a year more poor. Given that this one ad is just a tiny bit of mudslinging, as compared to the huge amounts of vile half-truths and vitriol thrown at Walker in the recall election, and that Burke’s claims in almost every other political ad have been thoroughly debunked by the Walker campaign, Republicans could find reason for optimism, despite the ad. If Burke is unsuccessful, it may give impetus to presidential aspirations Walker might have for 2016.

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