



Wisconsin Unions, Democrats Seek Gov. Walker Recall

Outraged over Walker's successful campaign to [rein in government-sector unions and balance the state budget](#), big-government activists have been on the warpath for months. And Democrats, whose political campaigns rely heavily on labor-group contributions, do not plan to give up easily.

"It has become clearer than ever that the people of Wisconsin — the traditions and institutions of our great state — cannot endure any more of Scott Walker's abuses," [claimed](#) Wisconsin Democratic Party boss Mike Tate in a statement, noting that there was only a month left to "organize, train and fund an army of volunteers." He also blasted Gov. Walker's efforts to curtail public servants' collective-bargaining privileges.



Announcing the decision on MSNBC's *The Ed Show*, Tate [acknowledged](#) that the campaign would be "tough" — especially because Gov. Walker could raise up to \$70 million for the battle. But the Democratic Party and its union allies appear confident.

Big labor groups in Wisconsin immediately jumped on board. Most of them decried alleged attacks on the "middle class" and "working people" in public statements supporting the recall efforts.

"Scott Walker has divided Wisconsin," [complained](#) Wisconsin AFL-CIO boss Phil Neuenfeldt. "The people have spoken and a Scott Walker recall will move forward." The state SEIU [Service Employees International Union] and government-teacher unions also sent out similar press releases. Even the United Steelworkers union endorsed the effort.

Of course, Big Labor was outraged when Republicans passed a bill earlier this year making union dues and membership optional for public servants. Adding to labor bosses' wrath was the fact that government employees will be allowed to vote on whether or not to keep their unions at all.

Democrats did everything in their power to stop the bill, with Democratic Senators even [fleeing the state](#) in an effort to prevent a vote. Union bosses and statist organizations — many of them from out of state — simultaneously orchestrated weeks of [massive and sometimes frightening demonstrations](#) in Madison.

When contacted by the press, Gov. Walker's office referred questions to the state GOP. The day after the announcement, however, he was quoted by various media outlets downplaying the recall efforts and touting his administration's successes.

"From our standpoint in our own campaign, we are really focused on helping the private sector of the state create 250,000 jobs," Gov. Walker [said](#). "What others are working on, what the cynics might be involved in, is not as much of a factor as what we're doing to help people ... across the state create more jobs."



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 12, 2011

The Wisconsin Republican Party also reacted calmly. "Wisconsin school districts and local municipalities have saved millions of taxpayer dollars thanks to the governor's reforms, and we welcome and encourage a comparison between the positive results we're seeing around the state and the failed policies of the past favored by those seeking a recall," [said](#) state GOP Executive Director Stephan Thompson in a statement.

Well over 500,000 signatures on petitions will be needed to force an election, which represents one-quarter of the total number of votes cast in the 2010 Governor's race. Recall organizers, however, said they would be aiming even higher.

Analysts said collecting that many signatures in just 60 days would be a tough challenge, but not beyond the realm of possibility. An "independent" political action committee known as United Wisconsin will be working to gather signatures. Backed by the state Democratic Party and Big Labor, the group claims to have over 200,000 pledges so far.

If the campaign succeeds, a recall election between Walker and a yet-to-be-selected Democrat would take place sometime in the spring. But only two Governors have been successfully recalled in U.S. history, and experts said the battle in Wisconsin would be difficult at the very least.

A [poll](#) released this week by the state Democrat Party purported to show that an estimated 51 percent of voters supported ousting Walker in September. But a [survey](#) by Public Policy Polling released in August revealed that most voters were opposed to a recall. More than a few prominent voices urged activists not to risk another failure.

Even members of the establishment press have advised Wisconsin Democrats to avoid launching a recall. The *Los Angeles Times*, which expressed nothing but contempt for Walker and his policies in a recent editorial, still [noted](#): "We humbly submit this counsel to Badger State Democrats who are launching a recall drive against Gov. Scott Walker: Don't do it."

Targeting a Governor for a recall over policy disagreements is a "terrible idea," the editorial said. "Elections have consequences, and sometimes your side loses. Recalls are a useful tool when a politician commits misconduct, but that's not the case in Wisconsin. Democrats should accept that and move on."

Statist activists in Wisconsin have already been humiliated following defeats in several important battles this year. After failing to stop the "budget-repair bill," Democrats and unions launched an electoral assault to replace a conservative Wisconsin Supreme Court justice. They failed.

Then they launched recall campaigns against six GOP state senators in an effort to flip control of the Wisconsin Senate to the Democratic Party. [They failed again](#). But even if the recall effort targeting Gov. Walker fails as well, the war will go on because the [stakes are so high](#).

Facing a [multi-billion dollar budget shortfall, Walker and the GOP tried to trim costs](#) by reining in public servants' taxpayer-funded benefits. Among other changes, government employees were forced to contribute slightly more to their unimaginably generous pensions and benefits.

But most upsetting to union bosses and the Democrat politicians they fund was the fact that public servants are no longer forced to join and contribute to unions. And if the taxpayer victory goes unchallenged, labor leaders fear the move in Wisconsin could spread nationwide.

Speculation about how much help the recall effort would receive from the national Democratic Party and out-of-state union groups was running rampant following the announcement. But Christian



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Schneider, a senior fellow at the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, [put it bluntly](#): “The recall effort isn’t a state effort, but one handed down from the national Democratic political machine.”

Meanwhile, Democrat lawmakers in Wisconsin just [introduced legislation](#) that would undo the changes adopted this year. The bill would make union dues mandatory again for public-sector employees while forcing the state to siphon dues out of each government employee’s paycheck.

Analysts said the proposal stands little chance of getting through the GOP-controlled legislature. But Democrats are hoping the Walker recall campaign will help build support among “moderate” Republicans.

Estimates on the cost to taxpayers of a statewide recall election are not available, according to election officials cited in [news reports](#). The public’s bill for state Senate recalls earlier this year topped \$2 million, however, and a statewide race could easily surpass that.

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