

February 11, 2011

[The Pitfalls of Being a Do-Something Governor](#)

Filed under: [Budget, Bureaucracy](#) @ Christian Schneider @ 9:55 am

Can Wisconsin handle the truth? We're about to find out.

Think back to all the politicians you've seen that go back on campaign promises. Make a list of all the candidates that tell you just what you want to hear. Your pen will run out of ink before you get halfway through. WPRI polling has shown record levels of distrust towards elected officials, as the public doesn't think most politicians have any courage or any convictions.

And yet here in Wisconsin, we have a new governor who is both carrying through on a campaign promise and being honest about the state's fiscal situation. And he will be excoriated for it.

Today, Governor Scott Walker will be officially introducing his plan to significantly reduce the influence of public employee unions. His plan will require unionized state workers to contribute 5% to their pensions (they contribute nothing now), and 12% to their health insurance (doubling the 6% they now contribute.) If Walker's plan doesn't pass, unions can expect over 6,000 worker layoffs in order to aid in covering the state's deficit.

Naturally, the public employee unions will act as if Walker has just personally thrown their grandmother out into the street. They will use verbs indicating physical violence – "Walker assaults public employees," or "Walker declares war on government workers." Walker will be taking a "meat cleaver" to the children of the state, or better yet, from Senator Spencer Cogg: Walker has introduced "legalized slavery." (As if slaves in the South were saying, "boy, I'm glad we don't make an average of \$50,000 per year with full health and pension benefits. *Thank God* we're not Wisconsin government workers.")

Democratic Assemblyman Mark Pocan [fell just short](#) of actually urging state workers to strike, saying he hopes "public employees will make their value expressly known in the days to come." Public employee strikes are illegal and have been virtually nonexistent since passage of a landmark mediation-arbitration law in 1977. How often do you see a publicly elected official urging citizens to break the law?

You'll see these public employee histrionics because they have been lulled into complacency. We're coming off a decade where unions were told they could operate as-is despite budget cuts. We've been told we can continue to spend despite plummeting tax receipts. We've been told we can eat all we want and never get fat. We've had a Legislature and Governor unwilling to make tough decisions, thereby throwing the state budget \$3.6 billion out of whack.

In November, we elected a governor who said he was going to do something about it. And now he is. And the unions and their sycophantic legislators are serving notice – don't ever take the steps necessary to balance the state's books, or else. A lesson Scott Walker's predecessor took to heart.