

# American Federation of Teachers Local 212: Condemned Governor Walker's veto eliminating the Education Approval Board as an independent agency

Posted on Thursday, Sep 28, 2017

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Dr. Lisa Conley  
(414) 429-7883  
(414) 765-0910

According to Dr. Michael Rosen, a retired economics instructor and prominent critic of for-profit colleges, "Thousands of economically disadvantaged students will be hurt by this veto. Wisconsin is now open for business for these predatory enterprises that are educational institutions in name only."

As Wisconsin's postsecondary education regulatory agency, the EAB's mission was "To protect Wisconsin's consumers and support quality educational options."

"The EAB has played a major role in monitoring and regulating higher education for-profit schools, and in doing so, protecting students from their documented predatory practices," according to Dr. Lisa Conley, Life Sciences instructor and president of AFT Local 212." While the Education Approval Board was not a particularly aggressive agency, it was independent of political influence, did not rely on taxpayer money, and had intervened to protect Wisconsin students from some of the most egregious for-profit schools like ITT Tech and Everest College."

The 2017-2019 budget passed by the Wisconsin Legislature moved the EAB's 6.5

positions to the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) as of January 1, 2018 and called for elimination of the EAB's independent review board by July. In contrast, Governor Scott Walker's partial vetoes resulted in the immediate layoff of all current EAB employees, the immediate transfer of their duties to the DSPS, and the swift dismantling of the EAB review board. Conley noted, "Even in the unlikely event that the Walker administration fills these positions, we are confident that they will be filled by appointees who are opposed to establishing educational standards for for-profit schools."

Former UW-Madison researcher, Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, a nationally recognized authority on college affordability is not surprised by these actions, and in fact, could have predicted them. "In 2013, I served on a panel assembled by the Educational Approval Board to create accountability metrics for the for-profit institutions operating in Wisconsin. We were there to ensure that Wisconsin taxpayers were getting the quality education they were paying for. The day after that panel met, Walker and his minions, including Steve Nass, began an effort to shut down the EAB." Goldrick-Rab, now Professor of Higher Education Policy and Sociology at Temple University, continued, "The message is clear: the needs of taxpayers do not matter. The profiteering of this group of Republicans takes precedence."

Governor Walker, who has been a champion of the for-profit sector while slashing state support for public higher education, has indeed opposed the Educational Approval Board's oversight role in the past. In 2015, only a year after praising ITT Tech's Greenfield campus, he proposed a budget that would eliminate the EAB's 6.5 positions and board, leaving only one part-time staffer responsible for its work. The Legislature's Joint Finance Committee removed this provision from that budget. One year later ITT Tech collapsed, abandoning nearly 500 students in Milwaukee alone.

"For-profit colleges, including Everest College, The Art Institute of Wisconsin, Sanford Brown and ITT Tech, have preyed on Wisconsin students," said Dr. Rosen who led unsuccessful efforts to prevent Everest and the Art Institute from receiving public subsidies in Milwaukee. "They have been subject to a Senate investigation, and sued by multiple states' Attorney Generals including those from Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota, as well as by the federal government, for engaging in fraudulent recruiting, enrollment and job placement practices."

Milwaukee was targeted as a lucrative market during the Great Recession by the for-profit sector.

“These schools are businesses whose primary goal is to make money, plain and simple,” said Dr. Conley. “They game the federal financial aid system by targeting low-income students, single mothers, people of color, and veterans. Students enroll hoping to secure a quality education that will quickly lead to family supporting employment. Instead, they are too frequently left with no jobs, huge debts, credits that don’t transfer, and broken dreams.”

“By laying off the staff and moving the positions to the DSPS, Walker is achieving his long-sought goal of eliminating any accountability over the for-profit sector”, said Rosen. “Wisconsin will truly be open for business for predatory colleges. Wisconsin students and their families will pay the price.”