

Gov. Walker: “The Wisconsin Lesson: Voters Will Reward Republicans If They Do What They Promised”

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[MADISON, WI] – In case you missed it, conservative columnist and author Marc Thiessen wrote a column in *The Washington Post* today highlighting how Gov. Walker’s bold conservative reforms in Wisconsin – even in the face of protest – offer a model for Republicans tackling Obamacare, tax reform, and other issues. You can read the column [here](#), or below:

“The Wisconsin lesson: Voters will reward Republicans if they do what they promised”

By Marc Thiessen

Six weeks into a new administration, with unified Republican government for the first time in a decade, the GOP should be busy enacting a bold reform agenda. Instead, the party is wracked by internal divisions on key issues from health care to taxes.

After House Republicans released their long-awaited bill to repeal and replace Obamacare it was attacked from all sides of the GOP spectrum — with conservatives calling it “Obamacare lite” and moderates openly worrying it won’t do enough for the Obamacare Medicaid expansion population or those who will lose their Obamacare subsidies. The House GOP tax plan also faces intra-Republican disagreements over a proposed “[border adjustment tax](#)” (BAT) that would apply

a reduced corporate tax to imports, while making U.S. exports tax free.

Democrats are refusing to cooperate with any GOP initiatives, which means all these reforms must be passed with Republican votes alone using an arcane process called “reconciliation.” So if Republicans can’t work out their differences nothing will get done. And to intimidate Republicans into inaction, the left is ramping up anti-GOP protests across the country, sending activists to disrupt town hall meetings and harass Republican lawmakers.

Sounds like a hopeless situation? Not to Scott Walker. For the Wisconsin governor, it seems like déjà vu all over again. In 2011, after winning the governorship and control to both houses of the Wisconsin legislature, Walker faced a divided Republican caucus and 100,000 protesters marching on and occupying his state capitol to protest his collective bargaining reform legislation. His polls were so low, he says, TIME magazine declared him “[Dead Man Walker](#).” Yet he managed to unite his party and overcome Democratic obstruction (including 14 Democratic legislators who fled the state to prevent a quorum). (Disclosure: I have co-authored a book with Walker.)

Result? His legislation passed, and voters rewarded him at the polls. “We’ve now won three cycles in a row – ’12, ’14 and ’16 — where Republicans have gained seats in the legislature and have moved the state so far that we not only got Ron Johnson reelected, but, obviously, we for the first time since Reagan carried the state for a Republican presidential candidate,” he says.

Walker recently met with the House Republicans to share the lessons of his experience in Wisconsin. And he gave them a clear message: ignore the protests and do what you promised. If you do, voters will reward you as well.

Some Republicans on Capitol Hill are urging their leaders to slow down, but Walker says that is a mistake. “On Obamacare and tax reform, it’s a mistake to push it off until later this year or next year,” he says. This is for two reasons. First, Walker says, “the longer you wait, the more excuses there will be.” Squeamish legislators begin complaining “that it’s too close to the next election. We can’t do these things.”

Members of Congress don’t get more courageous with time.

Second, he says, “You need time to show that it works.” If Republicans act now, the

positive effects of their legislation will be felt before voters go to the polls in 2018 and Democrats won't be able to demagogue their reforms. "All the protests in the world don't have the kind of effect that the protesters want if people see their lives getting better," Walker says. Tax reform will be "like pouring jet fuel into our economic engine. And then, no matter what people think about some of these other issues — building the wall, the travel issues and other things — suddenly people start seeing things that are having a positive impact in their life. And even if they don't care as much about the other issues, they see progress, and that's what people want. They want progress."

Once Republicans pass health care and tax reform legislation, they need to keep reforming. "You don't get political capital by hoarding it. You get it by reinvesting it. So every time you have a political victory and you get one reform done, instead of sitting back, you need to reinvest that to the next one you've got teed up and keep ahead of the curve." If they do so, voters will say "these guys are leading. They are actually getting things done. They're pushing reforms. I may not agree with every one of them, but they're doing the things they said they're going to do."

The left will protest, but ultimately those protests will backfire, Walker says. "The trend we saw in Wisconsin, which appears to be happening nationwide, is they overreact ... because they're just blinded by their rage. If opposition is just rage, I think everyday citizens see that. People start to look at them and say, that's not who we are."

The worst possible outcome will be for Republicans to break their word and do nothing. "Voters are sick and tired of people who they think talk a lot, but they don't get anything done," Walker says. If Republicans don't deliver, he warns, then the protests will only grow bigger — because they will be populated not just by angry liberals, but angry conservatives furious that Republicans failed to keep their promises.