

# IBEW Local 494: Letter sent to Gov. Walker

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September 19, 2017

Governor Scott Walker  
115 East State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Governor Walker,

I am writing today on behalf of IBEW Local 494 members, Wisconsin middle-class families, to strongly urge you not to veto the September 1, 2018 effective date for the repeal of prevailing wage. We also urge you to avoid using your partial veto to give the DOT the ability to circumvent federal law to cut construction workers wages on federally-funded projects.

As you certainly know, state prevailing wage is a century-old law that ensures the local construction market is utilized for on public works projects, and that local workers have the opportunity to work. Its purpose is to ensure that taxpayer-funded projects are quality projects, and that local workers aren't undercut by low-quality, cut-rate contractors and low-skill workers from outside the state.

Repealing prevailing wage law is bad policy. Repealing prevailing wage has been proven as an ineffective strategy to save costs on construction projects, and will instead hurt our state's economy. A repeal opens the door to out-of-state contractors to steal Wisconsin jobs on taxpayer-funded projects. We have already seen this trend as a result of the repeal of local prevailing wage you signed into law last budget.

A full repeal of prevailing wage will hurt Wisconsin businesses, jeopardize public

safety, and have a ripple effect across private-sector construction that will also adversely impact Wisconsin jobs and lower Wisconsin worker wages across the board.

Wisconsin has long been a leader in privately-funded worker training through joint management and labor apprenticeship programs. These programs have prepared thousands of Wisconsinites for family-supporting careers in construction. Our road construction workers are proven to be 43 percent more cost-effective than those in the rest of the country.

Initiatives like prevailing wage repeal that attack skilled workers have set Wisconsin on a course to gut privately-funded apprenticeship, and that has a tremendous adverse impact on the industry. Other states that have similarly devalued their workers have found that taxpayer-funded projects take longer, cost more, and sometimes require contractors and workers from other states to get the job done faster and better. Our state is headed in the same direction of these inferior states if these wrongheaded policies continue to be implemented and vital laws are repealed.

You don't have to take our word for it – you can ask your own Department of Workforce Development, as well as construction contractors here in Wisconsin, to learn what chaos will be created by the immediate repeal of state prevailing wage.

While we fully oppose prevailing wage repeal and hope you would delete the whole provision, we know better, given it was proposed in your executive budget and there is no doubt that you will sign it into law.

That is why we are simply asking that you not cave into the artificial pressure created by the three extreme senators who bucked the arduous process of the Joint Finance Committee and decided to hold the state budget hostage. Because their radical agenda wasn't supported by their colleagues, they have asked you to undermine the budget process and fulfill the demands of their ransom note.

This is an embarrassment to the state and an insult to the rest of the legislature and every voter in Wisconsin who voted for one of the 129 state legislators who played by the rules.

We ask you to honor the two decisions the legislature made in regards to prevailing wage laws – the delayed effective date, and requiring DOT to study the so-called

“Fed Swap” before the scheme is implemented. We ask you to leave these provisions as they currently are so that Wisconsin contractors and workers can have a chance to implement adjustments necessary to try and continue to compete for public projects funded by Wisconsin taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Dean A. Warsh  
Business Manager/Financial Secretary  
IBEW Local #494