

Milwaukee Building Trades Council: Construction workers to Republicans- “Cut your own wages”

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Contact:

Dan Bukiewicz

danb@milwbuildingtrades.org

(414) 345-7911

On Monday, Wisconsin's State Building Trades challenged Republican lawmakers who want to reduce construction workers' wages to first eliminate their own "prevailing wage" rules that make them the nation's ninth highest-paid lawmakers, even though most work part-time.

"A few lawmakers seem to feel that the way to achieve prosperity is by slashing middle-class workers' wages," said Dan Bukiewicz, President of the Milwaukee Building Trades Council. "This race-to-the-bottom economic strategy means exactly what it says," continued Dave Branson of the South Central Building Trades Council. "But if Republicans truly believe cutting wages is key to economic growth, we challenge them to put their money where their collective mouths are and first cut their own lavish 'prevailing wage' package."

Almost two-thirds of Wisconsin legislators self-report that they're part-time, with other jobs or careers. Regardless of the hours they work as elected officials, however, they receive a full-time \$50,950 state salary and qualify as full-time employees for retirement and health benefits, a total package worth \$75,000. These legislators recently increased their own per diems and will vote on a pay increase in this budget. See attached Construction Worker/Legislator Comparison

chart.

Wisconsin's lawmakers are paid higher salaries than lawmakers in all but eight states, making a third higher than Minnesota's, according to a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Texas has five times the population of Wisconsin, yet Wisconsin legislators earn seven times more in compensation.

Former State Representative Sheldon Wasserman acknowledges "it really is a part-time job" and called the scheme "a joke," as reported by WISN 12 on April 21, 2014. Even current State Representative Joe Sanfelliippo said in the same report that he "can do it as a part-time job."

"Our folks work their tails off, full time, in the heat of summer or cold of winter, to build our state's infrastructure projects on budget and on time and they sure don't get per diems. And when they can't work, they don't get paid," said Bukiewicz.

"So, if lawmakers are really serious about slashing the pay of our hard-working crews, it is only fair and honest they lead by slashing their own 'prevailing wages.' It's their strategy. We challenge them to own it," concluded Branson.