

One Wisconsin Now: Gov. Scott Walker on drugs

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Takes \$25,000 Contribution From Marijuana's Trade Group As Head of Republican Governors Association, While Lobbying to Expand Drug Testing in Wisconsin

MADISON, Wis. — Scott Walker has always been a politician willing to do or say anything to advance his own political ambitions. But newly uncovered information that Walker, as head of the Republican Governor's Association, accepted a major contribution from a marijuana industry trade group this year at the same time he was lobbying for authority to require drug testing as a condition of receiving public assistance benefits reaches new heights of political hypocrisy.

"The hypocrisy of Scott Walker has reached an all-time high," said One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. "While trying to criminalize people receiving help with healthcare or food for his political benefit, Scott Walker is hustling campaign cash from a group promoting legalizing drugs, for his political benefit."

Walker began calling for drug tests as a condition of receiving public assistance benefits in late 2014 as he also began ramping up for his run for the Republican presidential nomination. Finding the issue of targeting vulnerable populations with punitive drug tests politically popular with the right wing, he has continued, and expanded on his scheme. In 2016 Walker appealed to the federal government for waivers to require Wisconsinites submit to drug testing to receive food assistance and job training. Most recently, Walker has proposed making Wisconsin the first state in the nation to require drug tests for certain Medicaid recipients.

Yet in the midst of his political posturing on drug testing, Walker, as head of the Republican Governors Association, accepted a \$25,000 contribution to the organization from the National Cannabis Industry Association (NCIA) on February 7, 2017. The NCIA touts itself as, "... the nation's only industry-led organization engaging in legislative efforts to expand and further legitimize the legal cannabis market in the U.S."

According to State Sen. LaTonya Johnson, the drug testing regime envisioned by Walker essentially declares being poor or losing your job and collecting unemployment as probable cause that you are abusing drugs in Wisconsin.

"Gov. Walker's hypocrisy in playing politics with people who need healthcare access the most is appalling," said Sen. Johnson. "While he works to make Wisconsin a national leader in cruel, unnecessary and damaging policies for some of our most vulnerable populations, we must continue to fight for access to affordable healthcare for all Wisconsinites."

The experience in other states shows that drug testing applicants for assistance is a high cost, low reward proposition that results in very few positive tests. According to analyses of data in states like Arizona, Michigan, Tennessee and North Carolina, of those screened for drugs an infinitesimally small percentage of people actually tested positive for illegal drug use.

Rep. Jimmy Anderson concluded, "Governor Walker is trafficking in hypocrisy. Several other states have tried similar programs and they all have failed miserably while wasting hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars. Worst of all, Governor Walker's plan will do little more than waste our state's limited resources to 'rehabilitate' marijuana users when what we should be doing is using these resources to help those Wisconsinites who are struggling with real drug addictions."

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