

One Wisconsin Now: Gov. Walker's University of Wisconsin tuition bill has left Wisconsin with record levels of student debt

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MADISON, Wis. — Gov. Scott Walker can often be heard talking about his deep concern for college affordability. But One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross noted the actions of the career politician tell a much different story, having voted for a series of budgets that increased tuition by over 50 percent and signed into law a double digit tuition hike as Governor.

“Scott Walker says a lot of pretty words about making higher education affordable when he’s in front of television cameras,” commented Ross. “But his voting record and actions are just plain ugly for hardworking Wisconsin students, student loan borrowers and their families.”

During his time as a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly from 1993 to 2002, career politician Scott Walker voted in favor of state budgets in 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001, all subsequently resulting in tuition increases at University of Wisconsin schools.

A memo from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) shows that tuition at UW-Madison was \$2,227 for the 1993-94 academic year. After the passage of the

1993 state budget, that Walker supported, tuition increased to \$2,415 for the 1994-95 academic year. UW Madison tuition rose to \$3,568 for resident undergraduates for the 2001-02 academic year, the last covered by Walker's budget votes, a total increase of 60 percent.

Other campuses experienced similar increases, according to the LFB. Resident undergraduate tuition at UW-Milwaukee rose from \$2,206 to \$3,462 between 1993-94 and 2001-02, an increase of \$1,256 or 56.9 percent. Other comprehensive campus tuition rates rose from \$1,792 in 1993-94 to \$2,776 in 2001-02, a hike of \$984 or 54.9 percent.

Upon his return to state government after a stint in Milwaukee County, Walker, in his first state budget, proposed and signed into law an eleven percent tuition increase. The impact on students in the two year budget cycle was \$107 million in higher tuition costs. Students have since paid hundreds of millions more in higher tuition under Walker compared to the tuition charged in the 2010-11 academic year, before Walker became governor.

Ross noted that Wisconsin under Gov. Walker is now among the top five states in the nation for percentage of college graduates with student loan debt, with 70 percent of the class of 2015 graduating with a debt load averaging nearly \$30,000. Yet, once again, Gov. Walker's budget contains no provision to provide any relief to the estimated one million existing student loan borrowers holding a collective \$19 billion in federal student loan debt alone.

He concluded, "Gov. Walker's tuition bill has left hard working students who took on the responsibility to pay for their education deeper in debt. As a legislator, he voted for budgets that increased tuition by over 50 percent. As Governor he signed into law a double digit hike. And now he's turning his back on the people who took out student loans to pay this higher tuition by refusing to support common sense legislation that would allow them to refinance their debt, just like you can with a mortgage."