

WisDems: Republicans eliminate whistleblower incentives, protect corporations that cheat WI taxpayers

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[New Report: "Wisconsin taxpayers lose out on millions after Scott Walker, lawmakers repeal anti-fraud law"](#)

Sen. Leah Vukmir was on the budget committee that quietly pushed through the repeal to Gov. Scott Walker who killed the anti-fraud law; while AG Brad Schimel advised repeal even though it means Wisconsin can recoup less money from corporate fraud

MADISON — The False Claims Act was a powerful and effective tool that helped Wisconsin recoup money from corporations that ripped off Wisconsin taxpayers, until Republicans quietly eliminated it two years ago. This initial weakening of the law in 2013 and its 2015 elimination has cost Wisconsin an estimated \$11 million. And it's made Wisconsin one of the worst states for whistleblowers — the best tool to root out fraud.

These startling revelations come from [a new report from the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism](#) that exposes the devastating impact of yet another example of Gov. Scott Walker and state Sen. Leah Vukmir-led actions putting corporations above Wisconsin taxpayers.

Quoted in the article, Stephen Kohn, head of the National Whistleblower Center, says of the False Claims Act: “Anyone who has weakened this law or repealed it is giving a green light to people to steal from the Wisconsin taxpayer. Now the most important tool for discouraging and preventing those rip-offs (at the state level) has been eliminated.”

According to the investigative report on Wisconsin Republicans’ repeal of the state’s False Claims Act:

Wisconsin taxpayers have missed out on millions of dollars in settlements after state officials quietly eliminated one of the most effective tools for rooting out fraud in the \$9 billion-a-year state Medicaid program, interviews and public records show [...] Wisconsin would have qualified for an estimated \$11 million in additional settlement money from companies found to have defrauded the Medicaid program since 2013 if legislators and Walker had not weakened and then repealed the state False Claims Act.

Here’s who Wisconsin taxpayers can blame for selling them out to corporate special interests and “giving the green light” to fraud by repealing the anti-fraud law:

- **State Senator Leah Vukmir** was on the Joint Finance Committee and [voted to adopt the measure](#) when the committee [without “hearings or even public discussion by the committee”](#) slipped the anti-fraud law repeal measure into Wisconsin’s 2015 budget. At the time, Senator Alberta Darling, who spearheaded the effort, [specifically referred questions on the measure](#) to Vukmir. And when the budget came up for a final vote, [Vukmir supported its passage](#), selling out Wisconsin taxpayers by including a repeal of the anti-fraud rule.
- **Governor Scott Walker** [signed the anti-fraud law repeal into law](#) on July 13, 2015, selling out taxpayers and dealing a blow to whistleblowers that help root out fraud.
- **Attorney General Brad Schimel** gave bad legal advice, incorrectly claiming the state would collect more money. According to a program supervisor for the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, if Schimel had provided accurate advice, the LFB “would have presented that information to the legislators as they considered the budget amendment.” Instead, that critical information was not provided, costing Wisconsin taxpayers. On the nationwide settlement against the makers of EpiPen alone, Wisconsin taxpayers lost out on nearly \$700,000.

Lifelong career politician Walker has always put his national political ambitions ahead of Wisconsin working families, taking every opportunity to sell out taxpayers and protect his national corporate backers. Like Walker, Vukmir has [made a career of helping out her big money corporate special interest backers](#) at the expense of Wisconsin's working families. So much so, that Vukmir was actually made national chair of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a right-wing, [Koch brothers-funded](#) corporate special interest group that not only ["acts as a stealth business lobbyist"](#) but also promotes [climate change-denial](#) while [strongly opposing "false claims"](#) laws that "make it easier to recover money from businesses that defraud" states. Vukmir has let corporate special interests direct her legislative agenda in Wisconsin, and now looks to continue that pattern in the U.S. Senate. "Republicans quietly killed one of one of our best tools for eliminating fraud and getting back money from corporate special interests that rip-off Wisconsin taxpayers," said Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Martha Laning. "Republicans like Attorney General Brad Schimel, Gov. Scott Walker and Sen. Leah Vukmir claim to want to root out fraud, but when it comes to corporations massively defrauding our state, they took actions knowing it would make such fraud easier by eliminating incentives for whistleblowers and making Wisconsin ineligible for larger settlements against such corporate pharmaceutical bad actors as the makers of the EpiPen."