

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters: Walker tried to sell out the state's sporting heritage for a campaign buck

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Fifth Entry in 'Walker's Wisconsin' Series

MADISON – As part of its Field Guide to Taking Back Wisconsin campaign, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters released its fifth entry in its Walker's Wisconsin series today. The series recounts Gov. Scott Walker's extreme anti-conservation agenda and outlines just how far he's taken our state, once considered a conservation model, to somewhere that's hardly recognizable.

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters will update the Walker's Wisconsin series via media releases, website, and social media every two weeks until Wisconsin elects a new governor in November. Walker's Wisconsin concentrates on five categories – air, climate change, democracy, land, and water.

To read more, visit the Field Guide at conservationvoters.org/field-guide.

AIR

Walker increased indoor air pollution

In 2016, Walker signed Assembly Bill 25, which prohibited the DNR from implementing or enforcing federal public health standards for new residential or commercial wood stoves. The Clean Air Act sets standards to protect public health from harmful pollution like fine particulates or soot, which can cause respiratory problems and even premature death. Pollution from residential or commercial wood stoves can lead to serious respiratory problems when breathed in high concentrations. In low concentrations, particle pollution in wood smoke can harm the health of children, the elderly, and those with existing respiratory diseases.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Walker kicked scientists out of the Department of Natural Resources

Walker's 2015 biennial budget stripped the DNR of 66 full-time positions. He specifically targeted the Bureau of Scientific Services – ordering a 31 percent cut in budgeted positions there. The directive reduced objective science-based information used to direct the future of Wisconsin's natural resources. He also required large cuts to environmental education staff and communications staff. Those roles were critical to engaging and educating citizens about the threats to Wisconsin's natural resources. Sen. Tom Tiffany, the architect of some of the worst anti-conservation legislation in the state's history, admitted later that he suggested the cuts because he felt the scientists, teachers, and communications staff had an "agenda."

Walker ordered the DNR website scrubbed of climate change resources

"Earth's climate is changing. Human activities that increase heat-trapping gasses are the main cause," read the DNR's website before Walker ordered the language removed and replaced with language that argues climate change is a natural process. The DNR's climate change content included detailed information about potential future impacts of climate change in Wisconsin, including a teaching guide. When media reported some climate change material still existing on the site, Walker's spokesperson thanked the outlet for doing so – then removed that, too. Now, only a paragraph remains on the site. It states climate change is still "being debated." In reality, 97 percent of the scientific community believes human behavior is causing climate change.

DEMOCRACY

Walker sold a \$500,000 political gift as a pro-sportsmen initiative

In 2013, Walker used his veto power in the state budget to allow a \$500,000 grant to partisan electoral group United Sportsmen of Wisconsin. The original intent of the grant was to further the state's sporting heritage by creating shooting ranges or acquiring and managing fish and wildlife habitat. As a purely electoral group, United Sportsmen did not have any experience with hunter safety or wildlife management, nor did it have the necessary nonprofit tax-exempt status. To top it all off, the United Sportsmen's president was cited for illegally hunting bear. After it was revealed the group's parent organization donated to Walker's campaign, was exposed as a fraud sportsmen group, and fibbed about being a nonprofit, the DNR announced it was not awarding the grant to United Sportsmen. It was a clear indication that Walker is willing to sell out Wisconsin's sportsmen for campaign cash.

LAND

Walker politicized forest management

In 2016 Walker signed Senate Bill 434, which unnecessarily politicized the use of Wisconsin's state forests by allowing the legislature to dictate that 75 percent of state forests be open to timber production, rather than basing production on individual forest management plans. To have sustainable and ecologically sound state forests, foresters and wildlife biologists need to make decisions based on proper data collection and the implementation of best practices that consider all uses. The bill also banned the DNR from offering guidance to property owners on state wildlife action plans or to require them to protect at-risk species.