

Fight for \$15: Wisconsin Court sides with unions, blocks GOP power grab

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MADISON – Today, a Dane County Circuit Court judge ruled in favor of Wisconsin unions and working people in their lawsuit challenging the Republican legislature’s unconstitutional power grab rammed through during the last days of former Gov. Scott Walker’s Administration. The judge immediately blocked most of the unconstitutional laws from taking effect, restoring to the Governor and Attorney General most of the powers that were stripped away from them and handed to the state legislature.

In his ruling, Judge Remington wrote: “In December, 2018 the Legislature and then Governor Scott Walker upended the balance that this State has had for most all of its 171 years. The time has come to right this ship-of-state so Wisconsin can resume smooth sailing ahead.”

“This is a victory for democracy for the working people of Wisconsin,” said Ramon Argandona, President of SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin. “We filed this complaint to ensure that union members and working people who elected Gov. Tony Evers into office have their voices heard and have a fair shot at a decent future. We can’t move forward in Wisconsin when power grabs like this block progress.”

The judge found that the unions’ argument that the most significant and sweeping parts of the lame duck bills stripping power from the Executive Branch and handing it directly to the Legislature are unconstitutional is likely to succeed and warranted

an immediate injunction. An injunction against the laws was granted last week in a separate case brought by the League of Women Voters that argued that the entire lame duck session itself was convened improperly in violation of the state constitution. That case was about the process of how Gov. Walker and the Legislature took action, while today's ruling was on the constitutionality of the power-grab bill itself.

"Today's ruling sends a strong message to politicians everywhere that when you lose an election, you can't go back and change the rules to thwart the will of the voters," said Mary Kay Henry, International President of SEIU. "This victory shows the power that working people have when they join together in a union."

The ruling came in a lawsuit brought by SEIU Local 1, SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Area Service and Hospitality Workers Organization (MASH), Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, the American Federation of Teachers - Wisconsin, and a number of individual SEIU members and leaders.

The unions argued that after the people of Wisconsin voted to change the state's leadership, the outgoing government sought to change the rules and concentrate power in the hands of a smaller number of people, violating the Separation of Powers doctrine set forth in the Wisconsin Constitution, which gives the Executive Branch the exclusive authority to enforce the laws passed by the Legislative Branch. According to the judge, "One could scarcely design a better way to concentrate the power to suspend the law outside either of the two other branches of state government."

"As workers and as voters, we want to make sure that our state's constitution is upheld," said Solo Littlejohn, Kenosha fast food worker and Fight for \$15 and a Union leader. "Former Gov. Scott Walker and his Republican legislature did everything they could to minimize the power of Gov. Tony Evers, and disrespect the voters' rights. We refuse to be ignored and tolerate a rigged system and we believe our voices have been heard."