

One Wisconsin Now: Republican-controlled state budget committee poised to blow hole in budget, sink hopes for reforms

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Mike Browne, Deputy Director
mike@OneWisconsinNow.org
(608) 444-3483

Help for Student Loan Borrowers, Families and Workers on Chopping Block

MADISON, Wis. — Stripping a long list of proposals from Gov. Tony Evers' budget plan, as proposed by the Republican co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Finance, does more harm than just blowing an estimated \$1.4 billion hole in the state budget. Additional proposals to help Wisconsinites and their families are also on the chopping block, including help for student loan borrowers, expanded family and medical leave, a restoration of worker rights and enhanced private sector worker retirement security.

“Republican leaders aren’t just blowing a huge hole in the budget, they’re sinking hopes for people who are working hard and playing by the rules,” said One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Analiese Eicher. “That’s the impact of rejecting reforms to help student loan borrowers, give private sector workers options for retirement security, restore worker rights and help people dealing with an illness in the family.”

As they attended a special interest shakedown at a Washington, D.C. lobbying firm, Republican leaders of the Joint Committee on Finance released a memo announcing

the first budget action they intend to take would remove over 130 items introduced by Gov. Evers. Included on the list are proposals that would:

Create a committee to develop a state based plan to help student loan borrowers refinance their loans, just like you can with a mortgage;

Expand the number of people covered by the Family and Medical Leave program that allows people to get time off for an unexpected illness or to care for a loved one;

Protect workers' rights to band together at their jobs and to ensure workers on government projects are paid fair wages;

Start work establishing a pension plan that private sector employees could join, modeled on the successful Wisconsin Retirement System.

While Republican legislative leaders are set to take a step back on needed economic reforms this week, the full legislature must still vote on the budget, and will have the opportunity to undo reform killing actions of the Finance Committee. That, according to Eicher, gives rank and file members of the Republican state legislative majority the opportunity to show whether they will stand up to their party bosses on behalf of the people back home.

She concluded, "The state budget choices are going to be clear for legislators in the Republican majority. They can stand with special interests and their party bosses or they can work with Gov. Evers and their Democratic colleagues on a budget that benefits everyone."