

One Wisconsin Now: Republicans delaying state budget action until after fundraiser hosted by Washington D.C. lobbying firm

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Delaying Deliberations Until After Special Interest Shakedown a Clear Sign of GOP Budget Priorities

MADISON, Wis. — Legislative Republicans are delaying the start of their state budget deliberations until at least May 9, according to the office of Republican Joint Committee on Finance co-chair Alberta Darling, as reported by the state news service WisPolitics. One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Analiese Eicher noted the delay gives top Republicans, including Senate and Assembly leaders Scott Fitzgerald and Robin Vos and the co-chairs of the powerful Joint Committee on Finance, the chance to shake down special interests at a fundraiser hosted for them at the offices of a Washington D.C. lobbying firm on May 1.

“It’s a pretty clear sign of the Republicans’ budget priorities when they’re delaying the start of their budget deliberation until after they’ve had a chance to shake down special interests for campaign cash,” said Eicher.

Wisconsin Republicans’ hosts at the Washington D.C. firm the BGR Group were reported to have made over \$27 million in income in 2018 from lobbying on behalf of special interest clients including big pharmaceutical, tobacco, oil, energy and insurance companies.

Individual event attendees will need to donate at least \$1,000 per person for the general reception. A special “host” reception is available for donors willing to pony up a minimum of \$5,000, payable to the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

Ironically, the May 1 fundraising event is being held on the same day the Republican-controlled legislature began voting on the state budget in the Joint Committee on Finance in 2017.

Republicans in control of the legislature have also shown they are just as willing to ignore the will of the people as they are interested in shaking down special interests. In public comments, GOP leaders have signaled they intend to try to oppose Gov. Tony Evers’ budget proposals that enjoy broad public support on issues like health care, public K-12 education and higher education.

Eicher concluded, “While Scott Walker is gone, Republicans in the state legislature are showing they’re ready to pick up right where he left off, ignoring what’s best for the people of Wisconsin and instead auctioning off public policy to the highest bidder.”