

Empower Wisconsin: Madison mayor takes from unemployed to fill city budget hole

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 16, 2021

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MADISON — Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway wants to use special federal unemployment funds to fix her city's budget mess — while thousands of out-of-work Wisconsinites have struggled to collect on promised unemployment benefits.

“Gov. Tony Evers’ failed Department of Workforce Development hurt so many Wisconsin families. Now his liberal ally in Madison is trying to game the system to help bail out her city’s troubled finances,” said Matt Kittle, Executive Director of Empower Wisconsin.

Rhodes-Conway has asked city employees to take partial layoffs under the Workshare program. The program was designed to help businesses avoid layoffs by reducing employee hours. Workers in turn file for partial unemployment to offset their lost hours, 100 percent paid for through federal COVID-19 relief funding. So, Madison can reduce its payroll obligations and have federal taxpayers pick up the tab for the difference.

The mayor boasted that city government workers could earn “the same or more per week” thanks to the federal subsidy. Rhodes-Conway is hoping to save \$1.2 million in payroll that otherwise would have to come from unpaid furloughs. She’s even working with government labor unions on the plan.

Federal taxpayers shouldn’t have to foot the bill to fill local government budget holes, especially when so many unemployed Wisconsinites are suffering.

“Government workers have mostly been spared from the kind of wholesale layoffs we’ve seen in Wisconsin’s industry and other sectors, thanks to the lockdowns and restrictions ordered by Gov. Evers and unelected health officers in Madison and Dane County,” Kittle continued. “This is just more salt in the wounds for out-of-work-Wisconsinites.”