



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, LOCAL 212

Milwaukee Area Technical College
Affiliated with AFT, AFT-WI, AFL-CIO & MALC



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Media Release

WALKER-TRUMP TECH COLLEGE PHOTO-OP SHEER HYPOCRISY

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The union representing the state's largest group of skilled trades educators slammed President Trump's and Governor Walker's tour of Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) as nothing more than a politically-motivated public relations stunt.

"Sheer hypocrisy," declared Dr. Lisa Conley, President of AFT Local 212, "Trump and Walker are using WCTC and its students for a photo-op while pushing policies that undermine apprenticeship and skilled trades training," Conley explained.

"We need to invest in our skilled workforce. Yet, Trump's proposed budget slashes technical and skilled trades education funding. It will only make Wisconsin's looming shortage of skilled workers worse," she added.

Conley explained that President Trump has proposed letting the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Grant program expire, the only federal investment in career and technical education. "His budget proposal also ends the subsidized student loan program that pays the interest on undergraduate loans while borrowers are in college, and it raids the Pell Grant program that working and lower middle classes rely on to attend schools like WCTC and MATC."

Walker's track record is as bad as Trump's proposals, according to Conley. "Gov. Walker slashed Wisconsin Technical College funding by 30% in 2011, a cut that reduced funding to late 1980's levels and that has never been restored to the colleges. It is simply dishonest for Governor Walker to claim, notably at the start of a re-election campaign, he supports the state's technical college students."

In addition, Walker's proposed budget contains several attacks on the state's apprentices and skilled trades workers. He proposed eliminating licensure examinations for Journeyman Electricians, Plumbers, and Automatic Fire Sprinkler System Fitters.

Andy Lewis, a Journeymen steamfitter and MATC instructor, explained, "These exams are critical to ensuring our skilled trades people have mastered the skills required for their trade. They also certify our skilled people's ability, providing them with a portable certification they can use on any job anywhere in the country. And they ensure the public's safety. Just like we require doctors and nurses to pass board exams to ensure the public's safety, so we require our skilled trades people to take the equivalent in their occupation."

(Continued)

Gov. Walker also proposed the creation of an undemocratic Occupational License Review Board that will eliminate or weaken licenses for all professions and occupations. As Dr. Conley, a former Certified Nuclear Medicine Technologist noted, "These licenses are designed to protect the public by ensuring that healthcare workers, skilled tradesmen and other workers are properly trained."

Walker has also proposed completely eliminating Wisconsin's Prevailing Wage statutes and prohibiting state and local governments from using Project Labor Agreements.

Dr. Michael Rosen, a recently retired MATC Economics Professor and former WTCS state board member, said, "These policies are designed to drive down the wages of skilled tradesmen making skilled trades employment less attractive. Any freshman Economics student could tell you that the best way to address a labor shortage is to raise wages, making the work more appealing."

"Career and technical education are critically important to educating a skilled labor force, the backbone of the nation's prosperity," Dr. Conley summarized. "We need our elected officials to invest in technical colleges and apprenticeship programs not hypocritically pose for photo ops while their initiatives destroy them."