



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Legislative Democrats Call Out Republican Colleagues: Get Your Facts Straight!

Madison –

December 18, 2019

State Reps. Sinicki, Hesselbein, Ohnstad, Zamarripa, Meyers and Senators Hansen, Bewley, Wirch, Ringhand and Smith issued the following statement today:

Early last week, a group of our Republican colleagues pretended to care about the struggles people in rural Wisconsin often face in order to claim unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. For eight years, these Republicans colluded with former Governor Walker to cut UI eligibility and made it much harder for working people to file UI claims. Last week these same Republicans wrapped themselves in false indignation over the fact that the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is saving money in ways that will not negatively affect those who find themselves out of work.

In what has become a pattern of scoring partisan political points by making accusations first and asking questions later, 27 Republican Assembly members issued a letter and press release, without checking facts. The truth is that DWD's recently announced changes will not adversely affect claimants or employers in rural parts of the state: no one will be forced to travel to Madison or Milwaukee to avail themselves of the appeal process. In-person hearings will still be made available in other facilities when necessary. By not renewing leases for underutilized hearing office space, DWD will save taxpayers nearly \$350,000 annually. Members of the Republican Party, which touts fiscal responsibility, should congratulate the Department for their wise stewardship of taxpayers' dollars.

The Republican rhetoric is ironic given the fact that these GOP legislators, who now claim solidarity with the unemployed, refused to stand up to former Gov. Walker when he included a budget provision requiring those who are laid off to wait a week to collect benefits. Missing a week's pay can be devastating for many workers and their families. Where were these champions of the unemployed when we tried to stop that change? Nowhere to be found.

And where were our Republican colleagues when the Walker administration went on to cut the amount of time a seasonal employee can claim UI without engaging in what is, in many cases, often a fruitless search for work? It was a serious blow to rural (and urban)

Wisconsin when locally owned businesses, tourist destinations, construction, and other seasonal employers had to face the reality of losing their seasonal workers by the time business starts up in the spring. These employers invest significant time and expertise to train workers who return each season. The new work search requirements created an ongoing burden on these employers and workers that continue to jeopardize their viability. Not only did these same Republicans refuse to join our attempt to stop former Gov. Walker's anti-business rules, they doubled down on their bad ideas by putting them into state statute during the 2018 lame duck session.

Republicans only seem to care about rural Wisconsinites when it suits them politically. People who find themselves out of work deserve better than being used as ammunition in the Republican's war on Governor Evers. Workers deserve better than crocodile tears.

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Contact:

Rep. Christine Sinicki, 608-266-8588
or Rep.sinicki@legis.wi.gov