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**Congress of the United States**  
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AND OCEANS

February 17, 2011

Governor Scott Walker  
115 East Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker,

I write today to ask you to withdraw your budget proposal to end collective bargaining for public employees. Our public employees are made up of tens of thousands of Wisconsin workers, working to make sure our state and its systems are fair, accountable and responsible to the people. We owe a debt of gratitude to all of them - the hard working nurses, public safety employees, and others who do selfless jobs like guaranteeing our children receive a quality public school education. Frankly, I'm offended at the recent suggestions that these public servants are the source of the problems facing our state.

Collective bargaining – the chance for employees to negotiate for fair wages with management – is key to our state's success. It is a time-tested, reasonable process. And let's be clear, public employees are not the reason state budgets are in trouble. We need to address the budget, but we can't just fix it by cutting the salaries and robbing the retirement funds of our nurses, teachers, and public safety professionals.

The fact is, these very workers have shown an understanding and willingness to compromise and make sacrifices to benefit our great state. For example, late last year unions in Wisconsin sat down and negotiated a new contract that resulted in massive pay and benefit changes. This showed their readiness to be part of the solution to the budget challenges we face as a state. But instead of working with them to find solutions to current challenges, your proposal just shuts them out of the process altogether. Now is not the time to punish those employees who are working hard to provide for their families. These are people who have already made great sacrifices in order to keep our state safe, economically competitive and a place where I want to raise my family.

In fact, my two sons attend public school in La Crosse. I'm worried that by refusing to work with the teachers, you are directly impacting the quality of our schools and the education my two sons will receive. Now more than ever it's critical that we recruit and retain qualified teachers in our classrooms. Isolating and demonizing them will only make that harder.

We're all Wisconsinites and I know we can pull together to solve Wisconsin's problems. That's what we have always done best and that's what our leaders must recognize. The only way we can move the state forward is by listening to each other and by working together. We must respect Wisconsin's workers and their contribution to the state and instead of blaming them, find real, practical solutions to our budget woes.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

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