

February 21, 2011

Tracking Voter Sentiment in Wisconsin¹

Majorities Oppose Governor Scott Walker's Anti-Worker and Union Agenda

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

Voters in Wisconsin strongly agree with the working families at the state capitol and oppose Governor Scott Walker's anti-worker agenda. Moreover, since the protests began, Governor Walker has seen real erosion in his standing, with a majority expressing disapproval of his job performance and disagreement with his agenda. Strong majorities disagree with eliminating collective bargaining for public employees and believe that if workers agree to concessions on pensions and healthcare benefits that the Governor should drop his plan to eliminate collective bargaining.

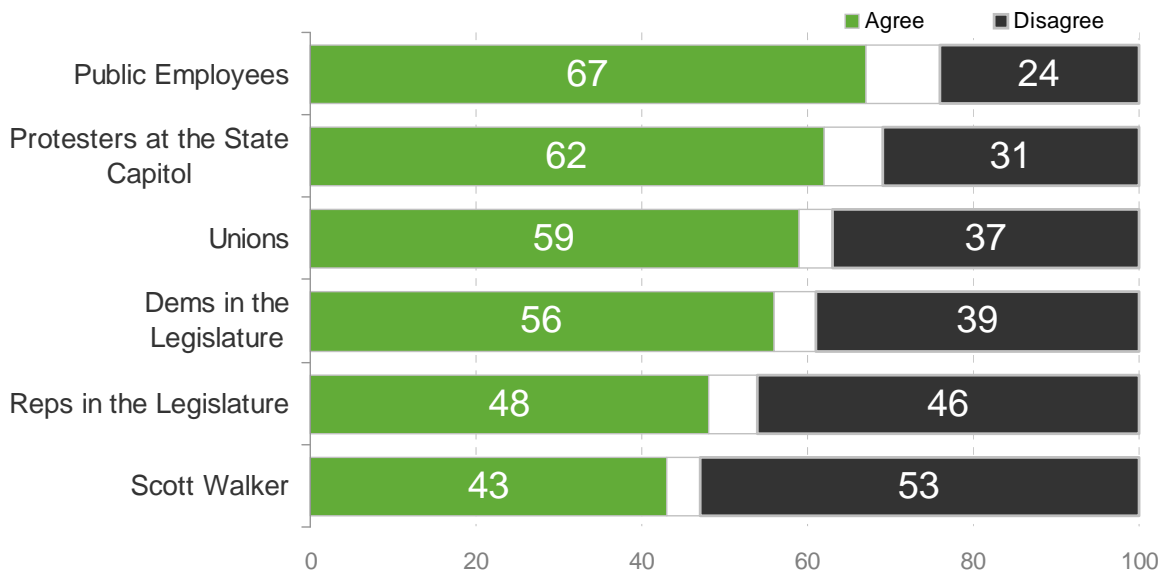
Walker's Standing is Poor, while Most Agree with the Unions and Public Employees

Overall, a majority (51 percent) of Wisconsin voters disapprove of Walker's job performance and give him net negative favorability ratings (39 percent favorable, 49 percent unfavorable). In contrast, 62 percent of voters offer a favorable view of public employees (only 11 percent unfavorable) and 53 percent of voters rate labor unions favorably (31 percent unfavorable). When asked if they agree or disagree with the position different groups and individuals are taking in the current situation, voters side with the public employees (67 percent agree), the protesters (62 percent agree), the unions (59 percent agree), and the Democrats in the state legislature (56 percent agree). In contrast, 53 percent disagree with Walker and 46 percent disagree with the Republicans in the legislature.

¹ These findings are based on two surveys of Wisconsin likely voters. The first survey was conducted among 604 likely voters in Wisconsin between February 16 – 20, 2011, and is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points. The second survey was conducted among 402 likely voters in Wisconsin between February 19 – 20, 2011, and is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percentage points.

■ Figure 1: Level of Agreement with People and Groups Involved in Situation in Madison

I'm going to read you a list of group and people, for each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with the position they are taking in the current situation at the state capitol. For each one, tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

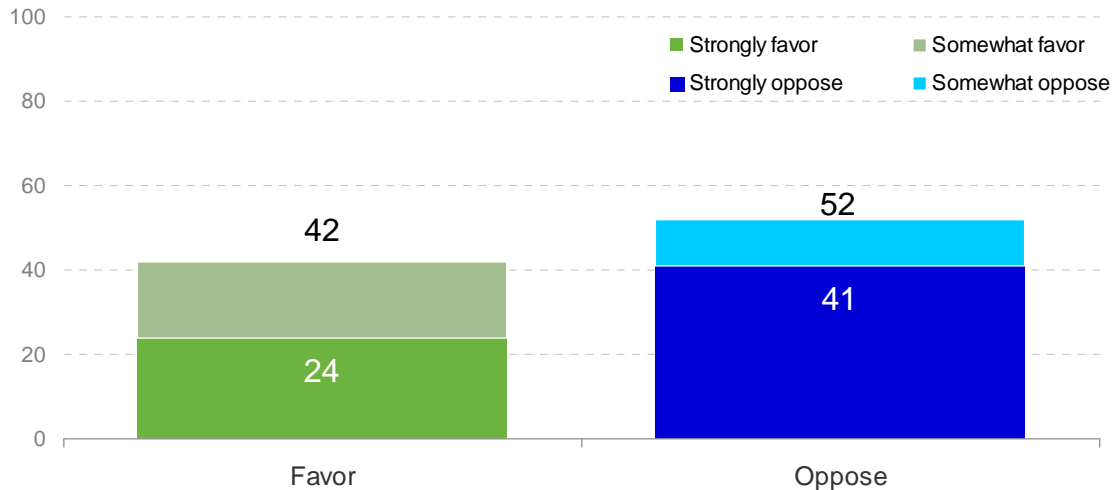


Voters Disagree with Walker's Agenda and Eliminating Collective Bargaining Rights

Just over half of Wisconsin's voters oppose the agenda offered by Walker and the Republicans in the state legislature. Only 43 percent favor it. It is striking that there is a real intensity gap with 39 percent strongly opposing their proposals and only 28 percent strongly favoring it. When voters are presented with Walker's specific agenda, including cutting benefits, freezing wages and eliminating collective bargaining, 52 percent oppose. The intensity gap actually increases to 41 percent strongly oppose and 24 percent strongly favor.

Figure 2: Reaction to Governor Walker’s Proposals

As you may know, Governor Scott Walker recently announced a plan to limit most public employees’ ability to negotiate their wages and benefits. The plan cuts pension and health care benefits for current public workers, and restricts new wage increases unless approved by a voter referendum. Contracts would be limited to one year, with wages frozen until a new contract is settled. In addition, Walker’s plan also changes rules to require collective bargaining units to take annual votes to maintain certification as a union, stops employers from collecting union dues, and allows members of collective bargaining units to avoid paying dues. Law enforcement, fire employees and state troopers and inspectors would be exempt from the changes.



When asked more specifically, 58 percent oppose eliminating collective bargaining, 57 percent oppose reducing wages for public employees and 50 percent oppose reducing pension benefits for public employees. Not surprisingly, 78 percent of Democrats oppose eliminating collective bargaining rights, but 59 percent of independents and even a third of Republicans oppose it as well.

Figure 3: Reaction to Specifics of Governor Walker’s Proposals

% Favor - % Oppose	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Eliminate collective bargaining for public employees	12 – 78	33 – 59	53 – 33
Reduce wages for public employees	15 – 77	32 – 57	51 – 33
Reduce pension benefits for public employees	19 – 75	43 – 49	65 – 20

Finally, voters are convinced that if public employees accept concessions and pay more for retirement and healthcare that Governor Walker should drop his attempt to eliminate collective bargaining. Three quarters say that public employees should not have their collective bargaining rights eliminated including nearly half of Republicans.

■ Figure 4: Opposition to Eliminating Collective Bargaining

If state workers agree to pay more for healthcare and retirement as the Governor has asked, do you think they should also have their collective bargaining rights eliminated?

	(% Yes - % No)
Total	21 - 74
Democrats	1 - 94
Independents	19 - 76
Republicans	49 - 47