

FISCAL SANITY IN THE UNITED STATES BEGINS OR ENDS IN WISCONSIN

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The stakes in the effort to recall Governor Scott Walker and Republican members of the state senate are higher than most realize. There is more to lose than reversing the remarkable progress we have made by balancing the state budget and improving Wisconsin's business climate.

Don't get me wrong. Protecting the fiscally responsible and business-friendly reforms enacted over the

last 12 months is critical. But what is happening in Wisconsin has much broader implications for our nation.

While the recall organizers claim a litany of trumped-up grievances against Governor Walker and GOP lawmakers, the real sin in their eyes was ending compulsory public sector union membership and state-administered dues collection.

That reform was like Delilah cutting off Samson's hair. It removed the unions' source of strength by eliminating the guaranteed revenue that was used to support the election of pro-union politicians. Those grateful politicians then negotiated salary and benefit packages with the very union leaders who helped get them elected.

It was a cozy circular relationship. There was something in it for everyone, except taxpayers who weren't really represented at the negotiating table, but were stuck with the tab for the rapid expansion of government caused by the mutual back-scratching.

Ronald Reagan, the patron saint of limited government, advocated "starving the beast." In other words, limit the growth of government by choking off its funding. Walker's reform did precisely that by taking money and power away from Big Government's strongest ally; the public sector unions.

No one should be surprised by the unions' tantrum-like backlash. The recall effort has two objectives. The first is to punish Walker and the lawmakers

who voted for the reform. The second, and the reason national labor unions have gotten involved, is to scare other politicians anywhere around the country who may have otherwise considered following Walker's lead.

All but a handful of state governments face the same budgetary shortfalls Walker confronted when he took office last January. And just like in Wisconsin, the easy choices are gone. Politicians are left with only tough decisions that strike at the heart of the ideological war being waged in the United States to decide the proper size and scope of government.

The Tea Party was the opening salvo. Last winter's massive protest rallies in Madison, the Occupy movement, and now the Walker recall are the inevitable counterattacks.

Cut government or increase taxes to protect it? The public sector unions and those who benefit from government's largess want to take the former off the table by demonstrating what happens to those who try.

That's why the stakes are higher than simply protecting the gains that have made Wisconsin more competitive by eliminating chronic budget deficits and encouraging businesses to stay, grow, and perhaps even relocate here.

The federal government owes \$15 trillion and that doesn't even include the debt carried by state and municipal governments or their pension funds. The cost of bloated government at all levels and the debt it has incurred are a major drag to America's global competitiveness and private sector job growth. Anyone who doesn't recognize that has failed to comprehend the lessons of the European debt crisis.

We need elected leaders who can be bold and courageous - two traits already not often associated with politicians. Walker is the role model. But, the recalls are designed to intimidate politicians into being obedient to the power of the public unions, which will make confronting our national debt crisis all the more difficult. **BV**

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