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The 800 Pound Gorilla In Wisconsin's State Government

Scott Walker is intent on cutting taxes to create a positive record to run on in his attempt to become president of the United States. He is so desperate to cut more taxes that he has proposed cutting \$300 million from the state university budget to accomplish that goal. The carrot he is using to gain acquiescence from UW officials is the promise to allow them to set their own tuition rates without any oversight - but only after a two-year tuition freeze.

The tuition freeze is a mandatory requirement of his proposal because his plan will not work without it. Otherwise, the universities would simply increase tuition to offset the \$300 million loss of state funding and leave Walker without anything to brag about on the campaign trail.

This proposal is bad in so many ways that it's hard to know where to begin to critique it. Needless to say, after the 2-year freeze, tuition will shoot up so far that it will leave the majority of Wisconsin high school graduates unable to afford to attend state colleges. For those who choose to get a degree regardless of the cost, they will be saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt - a burden it will take a lifetime to pay off. Children of wealthy parents will be the only ones who can attend state colleges, thereby creating a 2-class society with virtually zero upward mobility - the antithesis of the American Dream.

But what I really want to talk about is not the gutting of the University system. It is the billion dollar-plus bureaucratic monster called the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Gov. Walker made headlines in 2011 by submitting a budget that increased corrections spending while reducing higher educational funding. For the first time in the history of this state the corrections budget was larger than the higher education budget. With this new plan to cut \$300 million from the university, the corrections budget will now be substantially larger than the university budget.

If Gov. Walker wants to cut \$300 million from the state budget, he should look to the DOC. Since the creation of this bureaucratic monster in 1990, it has grown exponentially - far in excess of the crime rate over the last 25 years. The only way to keep this monster growing is by keeping prisoners in longer.

There are approximately 2,800 prisoners who were sent to prison prior to the enactment of Truth In Sentencing in 1999. These parole-eligible men and women have been routinely denied release on parole for the purpose of keeping the prisons overcrowded and the DOC growing. If all the prisoners who do not pose a threat to society were released, the prison population would drop to half its current level of 22,000. Closing half of the prisons in the state and eliminating the bloated DOC bureaucracy in Madison could easily save Wisconsin taxpayers \$300 million and keep our stellar system of higher education intact. But that won't get Walker elected by the conservatives he's courting. Their ideology mandates "lock 'em up and throw away the key" policies.

It's not about saving the state money. It's about having an agenda which forces America toward becoming a 3rd world society. There are the elites who attend college, get good jobs, own all the property and rule the country. And then there are the rest of us - those who languish in prisons, live in ghettos or on the streets and perform the menial tasks for a pittance.

Sadly for Wisconsin (and perhaps the entire country), the majority of people who are voting for Walker and his policies will be part of the 21st century slave class.

It's a shame that the Democrats are too locked into their 20th century paradigms to realize that it's not about race or gender equality but about class warfare - and the 1% of the wealthiest citizens are winning.