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STATE SENATOR

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Milwaukee, WI – SEN LARSON, REPS TAYLOR, BROSTOFF, CABRERA, SINICKI, AND LABOR ADVOCATES advanced the introduction of the Fairness and Freedom for Workers legislative proposals.

The first bill (Collective Bargaining Freedom Act) restores full and fair collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin. The long-term negative effects of limiting workers' freedom to join together in the workplace harms Wisconsin families and diminishes the overall quality of life for all workers. In recent years, Wisconsin's public sector experienced lost wages and decreasing numbers of qualified applicants because of the attack on workers' freedom to negotiate for competitive wages and benefits. The treatment of public employees and their workplace rights should set the standard for employer-employee relations in all sectors.

"This is about restoring fairness and freedom to Wisconsin's workforce. Everyone deserves a say in workplace safety and the security in family-sustaining wages. For too long, workers in Wisconsin have been demoralized and demonized, this is about again being the kind of state that treats all employees with dignity and respect, who will then treat all our neighbors with dignity and respect," said Senator Larson

Our goal should be to empower our public sector employees, rather than silence their voice and restrict their freedom to stand with their coworkers. Employees' right to stand together to improve workplace safety, wages, and benefits must be restored as a fundamental right. By restoring the ability for workers to join together, Wisconsin is set to remedy the worst levels of understaffing, turnover, low morale in over a decade. With full and protected workplace rights, families will be happier and healthier and Wisconsin will see pride in public service restored.

"What these bills are really about is fairness for Wisconsin workers and working families. Our workers are what make this state great and keep our economy strong. These bills will give all workers the freedom to negotiate over wages, benefits, and working conditions, and restore integrity and dignity to our civil service system. Because workers who make the pie should get more than crumbs—they should at least get a slice," Said Representative Taylor.

The second bill (Civil Service Restoration Act) restores the civil service system. Wisconsin used to have a nationally respected civil service system that was created to protect taxpayers and employees from waste and cronyism. Unfortunately, over the last 8 years, we have seen these thoughtful safeguards discarded as the integrity of our civil service system was systematically dismantled. This has left our dedicated public workers vulnerable to abuse, unwarranted discipline, and dismissal with little or no ability to appeal such actions.

"Workers are the backbone of our economy, and they deserve to be recognized and rewarded for the crucial role they play. By supporting these bills, I am proud to stand in solidarity with Wisconsin's workers and say 'enough' to the years of attacks on their rights and livelihoods," added Representative Jonathan Brostoff.

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These bills will restore the dignity that has been systematically stripped away from our public workers — workers who teach our kids, nurse our sick, plow our streets, and ensure our safety. It is time that we send a clear message that Wisconsin values the contributions of those who work for everyone.

“This legislation will go a long way in restoring Wisconsin to its labor roots and ensure that all employees have the freedom to organize and advocate for themselves,” added Representative Sinicki.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with labor organizations and workers to protect the lives and livelihoods of middle-class families all over Wisconsin. We must see action of these bills this session. Our working people have waited long enough. Here is what labor advocates have to say about this important legislation.

"The freedom to negotiate fairly and without arbitrary limitations is important to all AFT-Wisconsin members, from teachers to support staff to state employees. And Wisconsin's ability to recruit and retain the best, most qualified employees for the state under our civil service system is crucial as well. We support these bills wholeheartedly." — Kim Kohlhaas, AFTW president.

“Wisconsin educators are dedicated to their students, and that’s why it is imperative educators have a voice in school decision-making. Students achieve more when their schools are built on collaboration and stability. This legislation – a first step in fixing so much of the damage inflicted on public education – supports the unlimited, full and fair ability for educators to join together in negotiations with school boards and administrators. It should have never been dismantled.” — Ron Martin, eighth-grade teacher and WEAC president

“AFSCME Wisconsin enthusiastically endorses the Labor Freedom Package. The freedom to organize ensures that all communities are safe, healthy, and productive. Every day public servants guarantee that our communities have clean drinking water, our roads are safely plowed, and that our veterans are cared for. The freedom to organize means the freedom to keep workers safe in dangerous conditions, as well as the freedom to provide for our families and to have a voice in what happens at our workplaces. If members of the legislature care about addressing understaffing, shrinking access to community services, high employee turnover, low wages, and plummeting worker morale the way they say they do, they must support the passage of the Labor Freedom Package.” — AFSCME