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Contact: Sen. Hansen
608-266-5670

Column: Response to Rep. Nygren’s Comments on the Kimberly-Clark Bailout

Recently Rep. Nygren claimed in a press release that I don’t care about or support the Kimberly-Clark workers in Marinette because I have not committed to voting for AB-963, a bill that would give Kimberly-Clark, a Texas-based corporation up to \$100 million or more in taxpayer cash to protect 388 jobs in the Fox Valley. Unfortunately, there are significant concerns with this bill. So significant in fact, that I was told as many as 8 Republican senators are opposed to it.

Despite his claims to be a friend of workers, it’s worth remembering that Rep. Nygren voted to gut private sector unions like the one that represents the workers at the KC mill in Marinette by voting to pass the so-called “right-to-work” law. He also voted to gut prevailing wage laws that helped insure non-union workers on public projects would earn decent wages. And he voted for Act 10 that has decimated our public schools and made it difficult to hire the best teachers.

And contrary to Rep. Nygren’s comments, the bill he is demanding I vote for will not protect the workers at the Marinette mill.

Under the bill Kimberly-Clark can fire up to 7% or 210 of the 3,000 employees that make up its state workforce and still get up to \$100 million of your money. That’s between 150 and 170 workers that are employed at their Marinette mill. Under the bill Rep. Nygren voted for, they could close the mill and never lose a dime of the money he and Governor Walker promised them.

What happened to the days when Republicans used to say “you know what to do with your money better than the government does?” When it comes to helping their corporate friends though, apparently they think they know better than you.

Rep. Nygren voted to give Chinese-based Foxconn over \$3 billion of state tax dollars in cash to build a plant near the Illinois border with little to no benefit for the families in our area. Last spring he voted to give Texas-based Kimberly-Clark \$115 million more of your hard-earned money despite the fact that Kimberly-Clark is worth over \$36 billion and doesn’t pay any state income taxes and hasn’t for years.

Kimberly-Clark has earned billions in profits and used their billion dollar tax cut from President Trump and Paul Ryan to enrich their shareholders and to “restructure the company,” resulting in the firing of over 5,000 workers.

Meanwhile, our public schools are underfunded, our roads are crumbling and the high cost of health insurance is a growing crisis.

Maybe that all seems like a good deal to Rep. Nygren, but I still have a lot of concerns. Not the least of which is if they open the door to give K-C this Foxconn bailout, which corporations will be next to come to us with their hands out?