



2009 Budget Shortfall  
Union Blocked 35-Hour Workweek  
October 29, 2009

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel today quotes Rich Abelson, head of the county's largest union, as being skeptical of my call for layoffs, saying, "This is him crying wolf again."

The irony about the "crying wolf" crack from the top union leader is that had my 35-hour workweek plan gone into effect earlier this year, we might not need layoffs. It was his union that went to court to block it (none of the other unions did).

Obviously our concerns were legitimate then. Instead of starting the 35-hour workweek early in the summer, the union blocked us in court so we took other actions to balance the shortfall.

Later, as the shortfall grew again, I proposed a return to the 35-hour workweek idea. The members of the County Board instead passed a four-furlough day plan (that did not save as much money as our plan).

If we had started the 35-hour workweek plan early in the summer, we could have extended it to cover the current shortfall. Instead, the sad fact is that because of the actions of the leadership of one union (AFSCME), we have to layoff up to 200 people.

As one of the bond ratings agencies just said (while maintaining our status when others are being downgraded), 'the leadership of county government will do what it takes to balance the budget.' Too bad we don't have better options.

Scott Walker  
Milwaukee County Executive