



*As a new representative, I had hoped to be part of an effort to restore some of the bipartisanship and personal collegiality that was destroyed in 2011 in the first months of Governor Walker's administration.*

*Act 10 had ripped our state apart, pitted neighbor against neighbor, working people against working people, Democrat against Republican.*

*While we still disagree fiercely on many issues, including the Governor's proposed budget, we've made some progress at getting back to business. I had hoped that with 25 new members, we could continue that progress.*

*I've had many one-on-one conversations with fellow freshman and more senior colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and I think that's been the case. So I'm disturbed that we stand here today debating legislation that everyone knew was going to divide our state again.*

*There are a lot of issues around here that at least have the potential to be bipartisan: Finding a sustainable solution to fund our transportation infrastructure. Investing in broadband internet for our rural communities. Increasing training opportunities to help people prepare for family-supporting jobs. The bill we're debating today was never going to be a bipartisan proposal.*

*Each one of us knows that this is one of the most divisive issues that could have been proposed at this time. This legislation is an attack on private sector unions, and an attack on the middle class.*

*I know some claim this is about worker's rights and not union busting, but if that is the case, why is Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce one of the only groups supporting this bill? Why isn't there more support from labor? Or from the over 400 businesses who have banded together against this bill in the Wisconsin Contractor's Coalition?*

*Claims that this would help create jobs or increase wages in Wisconsin have not been proven. To the contrary, wages and benefits are lower on average in states that have so-called "Right to Work" laws than those that don't. And this bill puts jobs at risk by threatening the partnership between unions and contractors that allows unions to pay for the cost of training facilities that provide apprenticeships and continuing education to keep our skilled workforce strong.*

*Yet here we are, less than two months into a new legislative session, with a quarter of this body elected for the first time and still getting to know each other, forming new relationships that might bridge partisan divides, and we're forced to be here talking about an issue so divisive that*

#### 45<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



*both Governor Walker and the Speaker previously said they didn't want to bring it up this session.*

*Let's focus on Wisconsin's needs:*

*Wisconsin needs a budget. We will continue to have a fierce debate about what that budget should look like and what our priorities should be.*

*Wisconsin needs more jobs that pay a living wage. Instead of debating this divisive proposal, we should be debating the Economic Opportunity Agenda put forward by Assembly Democrats, as well as productive ideas Republicans have to get Wisconsinites back to work and give working families the raise they deserve.*

*Wisconsin does not need this bill.*

*For generations, we have thrived with the system we currently have in place. Workers who want to join a union may do so. Workers who don't are already protected from being required to join a union or pay dues that go to political causes they may not support.*

*Those protections exist in the U.S. Constitution and have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Current law simply requires that whether or not workers join a union, if they enjoy the benefits of a union contract they must pay their fair share of the cost of that representation. As recently as this past December, Governor Walker didn't see a problem with this system. He claimed private sector unions were his partners in economic development, and he too agreed that considering legislation like this would be a distraction from the important work we have to do as a state and would only serve to further divide us.*

*So what changed? I can think of only two things.*

*First, Governor Walker is running for President, and he needs to sign this bill into law to appeal to conservative Republican primary voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, rather than doing what he can to help middle class families here in Wisconsin.*

*Second, on February 3rd, Governor Walker proposed a disastrous state budget. This budget slashes funding for the UW system, public schools, SeniorCare, and for protecting our natural resources.*

*Meanwhile, the Governor maxes out the state's credit card to fund transportation infrastructure and hopes that the future consequences will be someone else's problem. Is weakening the middle*

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State Capitol: PO Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708 (608) 266-1192  
Toll-free: (888) 534-0045 FAX: (608) 282-3645 E-mail: Rep.Spreitzer@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Follow me on Twitter @RepSpreitzer or at Facebook.com/RepSpreitzer



*class and harming Wisconsin families the only available distraction from this disastrous budget proposal?*

*It must be, because now Governor Walker supports this legislation. The Republican majority in the Senate, bowing to pressure from its leadership, passed this legislation last Wednesday.*

*Now we are told that the Assembly must fall in line and pass this bill. We don't have a chance to amend the bill to provide reasonable notice before it goes into effect, or to remove draconian criminal penalties for employers.*

*So we stand here today in the Assembly forced into a divisive debate on a bill that offers destructive answers to a make-believe problem. But that doesn't mean we have to pass it. We still have a choice. This is still our vote.*

*There may be two parties, but there are 99 representatives, and each of us has to cast a vote that lets us sleep at night.*

*I know there are members across the aisle who have reservations about this bill. I know that this isn't how many of my fellow freshman on that side of the aisle wanted to start their time in the legislature.*

*We all have other issues we came here to work on. We all have ideas for real solutions that actually help families in Wisconsin, that we could even work on together.*

*So let's put a stop to this. Let's end this now. I know it's not easy to stand up and go against the flow within your party. But the more people who stand together, the easier it is.*

*So if your heart tells you that we shouldn't be doing this today, please speak up. And then please join me in voting against this bill.*

*Let's end this divisive debate, go home and talk to the people we represent, and then come back next week to do the people's business.*

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