

Testimony

Committee on Labor and Government Reform

Kraig Sadownikow

Mayor, City of West Bend

May 5, 2015

Committee on Labor and Government Reform
Public Hearing
May 5, 2015

Chairman Nass and members of the Committee on Labor and Government Reform:

Thank you for taking time to solicit public input regarding reforms to Wisconsin's Prevailing Wage Law and the continuation of recent fiscally responsible policies.

My name is Kraig Sadownikow. I have been Mayor of the City of West Bend the past four years where we have effectively utilized new State reforms to balance our budgets and reduce expenses while maintaining the high level of services our constituents demand. In West Bend we are proud the real cost of operating our City of over 30,000 citizens is 6.4% less today than it was in 2011.

The abolishment of State mandated Prevailing Wage Law is yet another way to give power back to the local level, allowing municipalities such as West Bend greater ability to maintain services without increasing taxes.

Undoubtedly, you have and will continue to hear valid testimony regarding the millions of dollars in savings that can be realized through the elimination of prevailing wage requirements. Most of these comments will focus on public works projects that utilize public funds.

I would like to focus on a less known but equally egregious component of the law that requires prevailing wages be paid on private projects, using private monies, that ultimately will be donated to a municipality or taxing entity.

In West Bend we are very proud of our parks and work hard to afford high quality maintenance of the entire system. The jewel of our City, Regner Park, is named for one of my mayoral predecessors. Over the years as budgets got tighter, maintenance began to slip. In 2010 a local group of park supporters (the Regner Rejuvenation Committee) took it upon themselves to make a difference. Over the next 3 years they, privately, raised approximately \$600,000 to totally fund a new stage and pavilion along with renovating concession stands and a band shelter.

This group literally went door-to-door asking for donations from individuals, service clubs and local corporations. The projects were built by local tradesmen, many of whom grew up enjoying Regner Park themselves.

The Park & Recreation Committee along with West Bend's City Council approved the projects and agreed to take ownership of the completed work once constructed. Building permits and review fees were paid just like any other private project. To our disappointment, however, prevailing wages were required by the State.

Fortunately, the projects did get built and have been a great success. The dumbfounding part is that while 100% of the funds were privately raised they only purchased 75% of the goods and services they should have. More privately funded improvements could have been considered and should have been accomplished.

Examples such as this are found all over the State of Wisconsin and range from high school football fields to performing arts centers and from park shelters to hiking trails.

As has been done the past few years, I ask you to focus your attention on protecting the taxpayers and generous donors of Wisconsin. Allow the laws of Supply and Demand to dictate the cost of construction, not the laws of Prevailing Wage.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K.K. Sadownikow', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kraig K. Sadownikow

Mayor

City of West Bend, WI