

Testimony of

**Janice Bobholz,
Information Systems Coordinator and
Deputy Sheriff of the Dodge County
Sheriff's Department**

for the

**American Federation of State, County
and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)**

before the

**House Democratic Steering
and Policy Committee**

Hearing on

**“The State-by-State and Congressional
Assaults on Workers’ Rights and the
Middle Class.”**

March 8, 2011

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Good afternoon, I am truly humbled to have this opportunity to speak to all of you on behalf of thousands of Wisconsin workers currently in the fight of their lives to have their voices heard and their rights that people have died for preserved.

I was raised in a rural community by two hard working conservative Christian parents that have always taught me to respect others and treat people like I would like to be treated. My mom was a public servant for over 40 years. My brother, niece, nephew, cousin and soon-to-be niece are all public servants. My husband is also a public servant and a Veteran. Union labor blood runs deep in my veins.

This is my story: My dad was never in a union. To this day I remember hearing his stories about terrible working conditions that he and others suffered as a result of not having a voice in the workplace. Yet he always went to work every day to provide for our family and he taught me what it meant to earn an honest living. I can remember my parents talking about a union coming to Dodge County to give the employees a voice at the table about working conditions. Although there was uncertainty of what that would mean for our family, my mother walked the picket lines in a fight to get the right to be in an AFSCME union. In her 40 years, she was involved in collectively bargaining labor contracts that improved the safety and working conditions.

Now, a second generation public servant and union member for 22 years, I am extremely honored to be a part of serving over 30,000 public servants as an Executive Board Member of AFSCME Council 40. I have not always been a public servant. I began working when I was only 15 ½ years old in the private sector. My parents drove me to and from work after school. I fried chicken at a restaurant. I was a waitress, a retail clerk, a bartender, an office worker, a data processor, and an office manager at a carpet distributor. After all those private sector jobs, I knew undoubtedly I wanted to have a voice about conditions in the workplace. I applied as a public servant to be a typist for the District Attorney. Although the pay was less than what I had made in the private sector, I CHOSE to be in a union so my voice would be heard. Every move I made in my career was my choice. I made the choices based on what my parents taught to me about having a good work ethic and a plan for the future. By choosing to be in a union, I had the ability to have a voice and move through the work force from Legal Secretary, Deputy Secretary, 911 Communications Officer, and on to the police academy to become a certified law enforcement officer, doing prisoner transports and currently performing the duties in the Information Technology side of law enforcement.

This is my personal journey, but MY STORY is the story of every hard working Wisconsin union member. Each one has “MY STORY”, and although we have all taken different paths to get where we are in the workforce today, we have had the right to negotiate those changes. To take those rights away from workers stops the middle class from moving forward or upward in the workforce and prevents them from securing safety in the workplace and security for their families.

The Governor's plan to destroy the union labor force under the ruse of balancing a budget is an attack on unions and the middle class.

Corrections officers’ safety will be endangered if they do not have a right to talk about their working conditions to ensure that correctional facilities are run as safely as possible. We have four prisons in our rural county and these officers are our friends, family and neighbors and I don’t want them harmed at the hands of our governor.

Governor Walker has out-rightly defied the labor laws currently still in place by not meeting with the State labor unions once he was elected. He instead spent the first 30 days in office passing tax cuts in excess of 150 million dollars to big corporations. It is no secret that he has put Wisconsin up for sale. Then he blames the entire state’s economic problem on public servants. Clearly he has another agenda.

Governor Walker and his supporters are going to destroy the future of our children, ruin the economy of Wisconsin, endanger our elderly and less fortunate, and destroy communities and lives of hard working people.

Thank you for hearing the “Wisconsin Workers’ Story” and thank you for doing something our governor has not..... listen to the people.