

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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## **Editorial: Keep watching Wisconsin**

Union-led recall effort of reform-minded governor Scott Walker carries national implications

The importance of thwarting the recall campaign against Republican Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker can not be understated: The Wisconsin showdown arguably is the most consequential election in the country this year. And with the release of recent polling data showing the anti-Walker effort leading, the stakes have become even higher.

A Rasmussen poll released April 2 found that a "majority of Wisconsin voters now support the effort to recall Republican Gov. Scott Walker." Fifty-two percent of likely voters polled said they would recall the governor, versus 47 percent wanting to keep Mr. Walker in office. While the election is still nearly two months away, those numbers are still discouraging.

If Gov. Walker, who has staked his career on challenging the power of his state's public employee unions, is removed, public employee unions with substantial influence, even nearly free rein, in other state capitals throughout the United States would be even more emboldened to push their self-serving agendas.

Andrew Coulson of the libertarian Cato Institute wrote about the objectives of public-school teacher unions, in particular, but his analysis fits with most other public sector unions. He wrote that public employee unions exist to raise the wages of their members, grow their ranks, increase their share of the labor force, thwart attempts to initiate pay for performance programs and minimize competition from nonunion workforces.

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When Mr. Walker took office in January 2011 he did something rare among political candidates and office-holders: He kept his promises. He campaigned on a platform that emphasized heavy-handed and assertive reform of public employee unions and made promises to oust special interests from the capitol in Madison. He, thus far, has kept those promises.

Mr. Walker's approach was bold, perhaps even brazen, and because he moved so fast to keep his campaign pledges some questioned his reforms. As Chris Cillizza wrote for the Washington Post, because of Scott Walker, "[t]he Badger State has the most polarized electorate in the country."

The recall campaign, though, transcends Wisconsin and, as noted before, if the recall effort succeeds against Mr. Walker, efforts nationwide at reforming pensions and other issues pitting the interests of taxpayers against those of public-sector unions will be damaged. It is not only most critical that he prevail – it is essential.