



## News Coverage on Recall

### Walker Survives Wisconsin Recall Vote

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WAUKESHA, Wis. — Gov. [Scott Walker](#)<sup>[4]</sup>, whose decision to cut collective bargaining rights for most public workers set off a firestorm in a state usually known for its political civility, easily held on to his job on Tuesday, becoming the first governor in the country to survive a recall election and dealing a painful blow to Democrats and labor unions.

With 53 percent of the vote, Mr. Walker soundly defeated Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee, the Democrats' nominee in the recall attempt, who had 46 percent, with most precincts across the state reporting results. The victory by Mr. Walker, a Republican who was forced into an election to save his job less than two years into his first term, ensures that Republicans largely retain control of this state's capital, and his fast-rising political profile is likely to soar still higher among conservatives.

Here in Waukesha, some Republican voters said the result ended the most volatile partisan fight in memory, one that boiled over 16 months ago in the collective bargaining battle and expanded into scuffles about spending, jobs, taxes, the role and size of government, and more. Democrats, some of whom are already pledging to mount strong challenges for state lawmakers' seats in November, seemed less sure about the meaning of Mr. Walker's victory.

"Tonight, we tell Wisconsin, we tell our country and we tell people all across the globe that voters really do want leaders who stand up and make the tough decisions," Mr. Walker said, delivering a victory speech to supporters here. "But now it is time to move on and move forward in Wisconsin."

In his concession speech in Milwaukee, Mr. Barrett said: "We are a state that has been deeply divided. It is up to all of us — our side and their side — to listen, to listen to each other."

The result raised broader questions about the strength of labor groups, who had called hundreds of thousands of voters and knocked on thousands of doors. The outcome also seemed likely to embolden leaders in other states who have considered limits to unions as a way to solve budget problems, but had watched the backlash against Mr. Walker with worry.

Some Republicans said they considered Mr. Walker's victory one indication that Wisconsin, which President Obama won easily in 2008 and which Democrats have carried in every presidential election since 1988, may be worth battling for this time.

"Obviously, Scott Walker winning tonight means that the Republicans are here for real," said Reince Priebus, chairman of the Republican National Committee. "Conservatives are here for real." Mr. Priebus was attending Mr. Walker's victory party at the Waukesha County Exposition Center, where "We Stand With Walker" signs were all around.

But even with the Republican victory on Tuesday, it remained an open question whether Mitt Romney, the party's presidential nominee, can assume the momentum of Mr. Walker's campaign. In exit polling of voters, 18 percent of Walker supporters said they favored Mr. Obama, and the president led in a matchup against Mr. Romney. Voters in the exit surveys also said they saw Mr. Obama as better equipped to improve the economy and help the middle class.

Republicans prevailed in at least four recall elections on Tuesday for other offices, including a race for lieutenant governor, which the incumbent, Rebecca Kleefisch, won. Scott Fitzgerald, the State Senate's majority leader, who had ushered much of Mr. Walker's agenda through the Legislature, also survived. Early Wednesday, unofficial returns showed a Democrat ahead by fewer than 800 votes in a State Senate race in Racine, and Democrats were claiming narrow control of the chamber, though a recount also appeared possible.

Mr. Walker, who raised millions of dollars from conservative donors outside the state, had a strong financial advantage, in part because a quirk in state law allowed him months of unlimited fund-raising, from the time the recall challenge was mounted to when the election was officially called. As of late last month, about \$45.6 million had been spent on behalf of Mr. Walker, compared with about \$17.9 million for Mr. Barrett, according to data from the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, a nonpartisan group that tracks spending.

"What it shows is the peril of corporate dollars in an election and the dangers of Citizens United," said Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, a school workers' union, referring to the 2010 Supreme Court decision that barred the federal government from restricting political expenditures from corporations, unions and other groups.

Voters went to the polls in droves — more than 2.5 million votes were cast — and some polling places needed extra ballots brought in as long lines of people waited. One polling location was so swamped, state officials said, that it found itself using photocopied ballots, which later had to be hand-counted. The final flurry of television advertising — with Mr. Walker outspending Mr. Barrett seven to one — seemed to have little impact on the outcome. Nearly 9 in 10 people said they had made up their minds before May, according to exit poll interviews.

The recall race carried implications well beyond Wisconsin, particularly in the escalating fight between wealthy conservative donors and labor unions. Many Republican contributors from

across the country who have invested millions in the presidential race also sent checks to Mr. Walker, hoping to inflict deep wounds on organized labor, a key constituency for Democrats.

The outcome was also being closely monitored in Boston by Mr. Romney's campaign and in Chicago at Mr. Obama's re-election headquarters for a signal of how the electorate is viewing the big issues in the race for the White House. The president kept his distance from Wisconsin, to the dismay of many Democrats in the state, in an effort to avoid alienating independent voters he hopes to win over in the fall.

A snapshot of the Wisconsin electorate, gleaned through surveys with voters as they left the polls, found that a majority of men had supported Mr. Walker, while most women had voted for Mr. Barrett. Almost a fifth of the electorate was 65 or older, with only about one in 10 voters of college age. The recall race unfolded against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, with only 2 in 10 voters saying their family's finances have improved in the two years since Mr. Walker was elected. About a third said their financial situation had grown worse, and more than 4 in 10 said their finances had stayed the same.

The political war in Wisconsin began in February 2011 when Governor Walker, only weeks into his first term, announced that he needed to cut benefits and collective bargaining rights for most public workers as a way to solve an expected state budget deficit of \$3.6 billion.

Tens of thousands of union supporters and Democrats protested in Madison, the capital, and the State Senate's Democrats — who were a minority in the chamber but had enough members to prevent a quorum — went into hiding in hotels and houses in Illinois to try, unsuccessfully, to prevent a vote on the measure.

By January, critics of Mr. Walker delivered more than 900,000 signatures on petitions to recall him, far more than the one-quarter of voters from the last election that state law requires.

The election, which cost local governments as much as \$18 million to carry out, has raised another debate over the appropriateness of using a recall vote to remove officials.

"Recall was never meant to be used just because you don't like the way the other side is governing," said Jenny Beth Martin, a co-founder of the [Tea Party](#)<sup>[5]</sup> Patriots, which made tens of thousands of calls to voters in recent days in support of Mr. Walker.

Around the nation, numerous efforts have been made over the years to recall governors, but only three, including the push to remove Mr. Walker, met the requirements to place the matter on the ballot. In California, Gov. Gray Davis was removed in 2003, and in North Dakota, Gov. Lynn Frazier was recalled in 1921.

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