

May 23, 2012

Time for more Wisconsin news. [Stephen Hayes](#) has a detailed report.

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I asked Jensen about this after Walker’s brief remarks. She told me that four of the company’s longest-serving employees told her they considered the Walker visit a “slap in the face.” They asked to be excused during Walker’s visit but were told that his appearance was more about jobs than politics. They were given the choice of coming to the announcement or working. They attended but didn’t seem thrilled. Walker is used to this.

To say that Wisconsin is divided—even deeply divided—doesn’t quite capture the intensity of the feelings here less than a month before the recall vote. In Brule, “up north” in the sparsely populated northwest corner of the state, the low-key owner of a funeral home kicked off an annual fly-fishing trip with a prayer that included a strong plea for divine intervention on Walker’s behalf. Across the state to the east, a previously apolitical entrepreneur put up a pro-Walker sign and opened his establishment to the local Republican party for fear that his business could not survive a return to higher taxes and more regulations under the state’s Democrats. Virtually everyone you talk to here can tell you a story about lifelong friends who are no longer on speaking terms because of opposing views on the governor. (Indeed, one recent poll found that 3 in 10 Wisconsinites say they have ended relationships themselves.) Tavern owners report regular disputes among customers that range from muttered comments to full-scale shouting matches. And worse. . .

... Walker has few regrets about his short tenure as governor. He says he’s learned from the experience and says that if he had it to do over again he’d spend more time explaining the process to Wisconsinites before moving to implement the reforms. But when I asked him whether there’s a part of him that wishes he hadn’t pursued the reforms to balance the budget, he’s resolute, then reflective. “On substance? No,” he says. Then he pauses. “A friend of mine, a supporter, asked me: ‘Do you ever think that if you hadn’t gone so far you might not be facing recall?’ And I thought about it. If I hadn’t gone so far, I wouldn’t have fixed it. I’m running to win.

I'm doing everything in my power to win. But I'm not afraid to lose. To me, it's not worth being in a position like this if you're not willing to do things to fix it. And that means sometimes not worrying about whether or not it's going to help you win or lose."

Still, he wants to win. Speaking to volunteers that afternoon at a Walker "victory center" in Waukesha, the governor acknowledges the new polls and his impressive showing in the primary and offers his supporters a word of caution. "Do not let apathy be the thing that defeats us on June 5," he says, urging the volunteers to keep up their efforts. "There are a lot of hardworking taxpayers in this state who for the past 15, 16 months have been sitting on their hands and saying, 'You know, I don't need a bullhorn, I don't need a protest sign, I can let my words be heard in the election, at the ballot box.' We just need to make sure that all those voices show up on June 5." ...

Jennifer Rubin has more.

Given current polling, it is not surprising that Democrats in Wisconsin are freaking out. The Wall Street Journal reports: "With little more than two weeks until Wisconsin's gubernatorial recall election, some Democratic and union officials quietly are expressing fears that they have picked a fight they won't win and that could leave lingering injuries." No one is bothering to claim a Scott Walker victory would be insignificant:

The election has taken on significance beyond Wisconsin state politics: Organized labor sees the battle as a major stand against GOP efforts to scale back collective-bargaining rights for public-sector workers, as Mr. Walker did after taking office in 2011. Some Democrats now fear mobilizing Republicans to battle the recall could carry over to help the party — and Republican Mitt Romney — in November's presidential election. .□.□.

And **Jennifer** posts on the Cory Booker flap.

On Sunday, Newark Mayor Cory Booker told the country on "Meet The Press" that the president's attacks on Bain were "nauseating." If that wasn't bad enough, the Obama campaign dug itself deeper by trying to clean up the mess. Booker was obliged to record a four-minute video that didn't make things much better, as Politico noted. He didn't renounce, and indeed he repeated, his assertion that negative ads were nauseating.

So the Obama campaign edited what will surely be hereafter called the "Booker hostage video" into a 35-second video that left out the continued criticism of negative campaigning. In sum, as Politico's Dylan Byers writes:

'What gets lost in the edit is the nuance of Booker's argument. Watching the 35-second video, you would believe that Booker was flip-flopping from his comments on Meet The Press and going on an all-out assault on Romney. In the four-minute video, Booker stands by his comments -- including "nauseating" -- and explains that while he does think Romney's record is fair game, he remains "frustrated" by the Obama campaign's negative attacks. '

Let's count the ways Obama's team has messed this up. ...

Ms Rubin lists the ten ways you can know the Bain attacks have bombed for Bam. *Unless you've really drunk the Kool-Aid, you probably have the idea that the President Obama's campaign has misfired on the Bain attack. How can you tell? Well:*

1. *Democratic critics of the Bain attack are piling up.*
2. *Politico, the ultimate home team paper (root for those to whom you want access), has gone pro-Romney, big time. (h/t David Freddoso)*
3. *Chris Matthews is having a meltdown. ...*

Jonathan Tobin posts on Booker's walk back.

Newark Mayor Cory A. Booker is a rising star in New Jersey whose record running the city has earned him applause on both sides of the political aisle. He's also thought of as something of a superhero after personally rescuing two neighbors from their burning home last month. But as far as the Obama re-election campaign is concerned, he has no more right to think as he pleases than Winston Smith, the hero of George Orwell's 1984. Just as Smith was forced to concede that two plus two equals five if Big Brother said it did, so Booker tamely walked back his criticism of the president's re-election campaign ads lambasting Mitt Romney's business record. ...

Andrew Malcolm with late night humor.

***Fallon:** London police will use high-pitched, painful sounds to disperse Olympic crowds if necessary. As 'The View' women put it, 'Looks like we're going to the Olympics.'*

***Conan:** A janitor has just graduated from Columbia University with honors as a Classics major. With this new degree in Classics, he's now qualified to become a janitor.*

***Fallon:** CNN's ratings have hit a 15-year low. In fact, things are so bad at CNN, that Wolf Blitzer has started renting out 'The Situation Room' for birthday parties.*

***Leno:** Widespread disappointment over Facebook shares on their first day of NASDAQ trading. Experts said they'd take off like a rocket. But it was more like a North Korean rocket.*

Weekly Standard

High Noon in Wisconsin

Governor Scott Walker hangs tough.

by Stephen F. Hayes

Caledonia, Wis.

Geeta Jensen had some exciting news: Governor Scott Walker was visiting Jensen Metal Products to announce the addition of 39 new jobs, part of a company-wide expansion accelerated by tax credits his administration had offered to encourage hiring.

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To say that Wisconsin is divided—even deeply divided—doesn’t quite capture the intensity of the feelings here less than a month before the recall vote. In Brule, “up north” in the sparsely populated northwest corner of the state, the low-key owner of a funeral home kicked off an annual fly-fishing trip with a prayer that included a strong plea for divine intervention on Walker’s behalf. Across the state to the east, a previously apolitical entrepreneur put up a pro-Walker sign and opened his establishment to the local Republican party for fear that his business could not survive a return to higher taxes and more regulations under the state’s Democrats. Virtually everyone you talk to here can tell you a story about lifelong friends who are no longer on speaking terms because of opposing views on the governor. (Indeed, one recent poll found that 3 in 10 Wisconsinites say they have ended relationships themselves.) Tavern owners report regular disputes among customers that range from muttered comments to full-scale shouting matches. And worse.

In Chippewa Falls, on May 8, Amanda Radle was driving to a Pizza Ranch in nearby Eau Claire with her estranged husband, Jeffrey, when they began to discuss the recall primary election being held that day. Amanda says that when she told her husband she planned to vote for a Democrat in the primary, he became angry and said she couldn’t vote. She threatened to stay in the car rather than join him for lunch—she was attempting to “rekindle” their relationship—if he tried to stop her from voting against Walker. The argument escalated, and when the two returned to the home they used to share, it turned violent.

According to a police report summarizing Amanda’s statement to authorities, her husband “attempted in several ways to convince her to vote for Scott Walker,” but Amanda “indicated she was of free mind to vote for whoever she wished to vote for.” When her husband asked about their future together, she responded: “Whatever you decide, I am going to vote.” Amanda told police that her husband, who was outside of her Dodge Durango at the time, opened the car door and threw his ring at her. According to the police report, “Amanda indicated she did not want the ring and whipped it in the yard.” With that, according to Amanda, she attempted to drive off, only to have her husband fling himself onto the hood in an effort to keep her from voting.

Jeffrey Radle and a witness, Ashley Grill, say that Amanda actually turned the car to run over her husband, squealing the tires to mow him down. Jeffrey Radle downplayed the recall election in his statement to the police, but his brother told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: “These crazy liberal nuts are always pulling this crap.”

So there’s no doubt Wisconsin is divided. The question is why.

By virtually every objective measure, Walker has been an extraordinarily successful governor. In just 16 months, the state has erased a \$3.6 billion budget deficit, and according to figures released this month by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, it will have a \$154.5 million surplus on June 30, 2013. Property taxes, which had risen by more than 40 percent since 1998, are down for the first time in years.

The unemployment rate is down from 7.7 percent when Walker took office in January 2011 to 6.7 percent in April 2012. Last week, the state’s Department of Workforce Development released numbers showing that Wisconsin had gained some 23,000 jobs in 2011—correcting a misleading earlier report suggesting the state had lost more than 30,000 jobs over the same period.

The subjective measures look good for Walker, too. On the stump, Walker is fond of citing *Chief Executive* magazine, which had ranked Wisconsin as the 41st-best state for business in 2010 and now ranks it 20th. Walker also points to a survey by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce that found only 10 percent of business owners thought the state was headed in the right direction in 2010, while an eye-popping 94 percent think so today.

So why is Scott Walker facing a recall vote? He hasn’t broken any laws. He hasn’t been charged with a crime. No one has accused him of accepting bribes or molesting children or any of the things most people think of when they think about recalling a sitting governor.

Walker is facing recall for one reason: His reforms have diminished the power of unions, and the unions want revenge.

The reforms that Walker introduced a month after he was sworn in—formally known as Act 10—restricted collective bargaining for most of the state’s employees; in particular, benefits were taken off the table. As a result, most public employees now contribute 5.8 percent of their salary to their pension; and most also now pay 12.6 percent of the cost of their health insurance premium.

Walker had served as Milwaukee County executive since 2002 and in that job had seen his many attempts at spending reform stymied by unions. He had come to believe that unless the collective bargaining power of public employee unions were limited, as governor he would never be able to bring about the changes that serious spending reform required. His top policy adviser hinted at the changes Walker supported in an interview with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in August 2010, three months before the election. “The way the proposal would work is we would take the choice out of the collective bargaining process,” said Ryan Murray, describing how Walker would rework state employees’ health insurance programs.

When Walker, once elected governor, formally introduced the changes, the unions exploded, and Democrats in the Wisconsin senate fled to Illinois to avoid a vote on the measure,

effectively blocking it. The subsequent standoff—with national unions orchestrating raucous protests in Madison—lasted several weeks and gained lots of national attention. But ultimately, Republicans in the legislature passed the bill, it survived legal challenges, and it became law.

The passage of the bill triggered two separate processes, one substantive and one political. On substance—the collective bargaining restrictions gave local governments across Wisconsin the ability to offset budget shortfalls (and avoid layoffs) by requiring public employees to pay more toward their pensions and health care. But even as the changes were being implemented, Democrats and the unions that back them began a campaign to undermine reform. Kathy Vinehout, a Democratic state senator and later a candidate in the Democratic recall primary, says her party conceived of the recalls while they were holed up across Wisconsin's southern border. "I do believe it was something we talked about when we were in Illinois," she said at a Democratic candidate forum last month. "And it wasn't just the governor, but it was a whole lot of our colleagues in the senate." Democrats, she said, were thrilled when the budget repair bill passed. "The first thing we thought was, 'Yes! Now the recalls are gonna happen.'"

So they spent millions on recall campaigns against six sitting Republican state senators, defeating just two in an outcome that the *New York Times* called "a victory for Gov. Scott Walker." And unions participated vigorously in a state supreme court election that pitted a justice closely associated with Walker—David Prosser—against a candidate backed by the state Democratic establishment and the unions. Despite heavy union spending against him, Prosser won.

As the Democrats' political efforts mostly failed, the reforms themselves were beginning to produce results. The school districts that have avoided the Walker reforms so far—either by working under existing contracts that could not be changed or by renegotiating their contracts to skirt the changes—are cash-strapped and laying off teachers. Districts that have taken advantage of the reforms are reporting surpluses and in some cases are actually hiring new teachers. In Neenah, for example, the school district saved \$1.8 million on health insurance and raised the minimum pay for teachers by 18 percent. New Berlin schools saved more than \$3.5 million in health care and retirement costs. Teachers in the Milwaukee Public Schools, however, protected from the reforms by an existing contract that was grandfathered in, did not agree to the changes voluntarily and as a result have experienced two waves of layoffs.

The reforms have proven so successful that the Democrats seeking to unseat Walker seldom mention them. That's significant. The ostensible reason to recall Walker was his restrictions on collective bargaining. And yet when Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett won the Democratic recall primary on May 8, he never mentioned collective bargaining in his victory speech.

Why? Beyond the fact that the benefits of the reforms would not have been possible without the restrictions, the union position is just not terribly popular. In a Marquette University poll taken last week, voters said they'd prefer to keep the new restrictions on collective bargaining rather than return to the old rules, by a margin of 50-43 percent. Independents, who comprise a disproportionate number of the very few persuadable voters in Wisconsin these days, prefer the new restrictions to the old rules by 53-38 percent. In a version of the poll taken before the May 8 primary, voters were asked to name their most important consideration in picking a nominee. "Restoring collective bargaining rights for public employees" was only the fourth-most-mentioned concern, brought up by a mere 12 percent of self-identified Democrats surveyed. ("Creating new jobs" was the top choice of Democrats, mentioned by 46 percent.)

So Democrats are seeking to recall Walker but are avoiding the issue that triggered the recall in the first place. That's awkward.

The result is that they've been trying to gain traction on an ever-changing series of other issues: the "war on women," a "John Doe" investigation of alleged misdeeds of former Walker aides, the Koch Brothers, Walker's ideology, even Paul Ryan's entitlement reform proposals. None of them has worked.

Over several weeks leading up to the Democratic primary on May 8, the Democrats competing for the right to challenge Walker focused their campaigns on jobs. There was some logic to this. Voters in Wisconsin, as noted above, tell pollsters that they're worried about jobs and the economy. Beyond that, Walker ran for office promising that the state would create 250,000 private sector jobs during his first term. Critics mocked the goal as implausible. Walker acknowledged that it was ambitious but noted that Wisconsin had seen similar job growth under former governor Tommy Thompson.

Since Walker's inauguration in January 2011, the unemployment rate had fallen steadily, but the state was still not adding jobs fast enough to meet his goal. If he had a vulnerability, this was it. Then Democrats got a break, at least temporarily. A new report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that Wisconsin's jobs performance in 2011 was poor. In some ways, the report seemed to contradict other indications that the unemployment picture was getting better. But the report was political gold. A headline splashed across the front page of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* on April 25 declared: "State Job Losses Worst in U.S."

Within a week, Tom Barrett had turned it into an ad. Speaking directly to the camera, Barrett declared: "Scott Walker is attacking me because he can't defend his own record on jobs. Last year," he continued, holding up the *Journal Sentinel* front page, "Wisconsin lost more jobs than any other state in the entire country. I'll end Scott Walker's ideological war and focus on putting Wisconsin back to work." It was a pretty clean hit, though the jobs picture was better under Walker than under his Democratic predecessor, Jim Doyle. And the newspaper was a good prop. With the success of Walker's budget reforms beyond dispute, it was probably Barrett's strongest argument—for a time, anyway.

Barrett won the Democratic primary on May 8, handily defeating Kathleen Falk (58-34 percent), former Dane County executive and a Madison liberal who was backed by organized labor. The good news for Barrett didn't last long. Walker had no serious opponent in the GOP primary, only an Abraham Lincoln impersonator who slid down the marble rails of the capitol in a YouTube video. Despite mounting no real get-out-the-vote effort, Walker drew more than 600,000 votes, nearly 15,000 more than the top two Democrats combined. Those results don't guarantee Walker victory on June 5, but they suggest that concerns about Republican "recall fatigue" were overblown.

The bad news for Barrett was about to get worse. On May 16, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development released new numbers on 2011 job growth. The state had not lost 33,000-plus jobs, as the earlier Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates had suggested, but had gained more than 23,000. Unlike the BLS estimates, which are based on surveys of less than 4 percent of the state's establishments, these numbers are based on actual employment records businesses submit to the state and cover more than 95 percent of Wisconsin employers. They're far more accurate, something most opponents of Walker—at least the intellectually honest ones—readily concede.

Tom Barrett does not belong in that group. The morning the revised numbers were released, Barrett and his campaign accused Walker of “cooking the books,” and he took to his Twitter feed to mount a counteroffensive. He tweeted links to two articles with headlines that seemed to bolster his case. The first was a Bloomberg article that made no judgment about the new numbers but hinted that the release was mostly political. The second was an article published on Forbes.com by Rick Ungar, a frequent Walker critic. Barrett tweeted the headline—“Scott Walker Magically Turns Dismal Wisconsin Jobs Numbers into a Pre-Election Miracle”—and a link to the piece.

But the Forbes.com article had been published the day *before* the new jobs numbers were released, and the author had assumed, understandably if incorrectly, that Walker would be using a different measure to count jobs. The entire article was based on that mistaken assumption. By the time Barrett tweeted it, it was at best irrelevant and at worst highly misleading.

If Barrett is not being intellectually honest, one of the sources for his argument deserves credit for taking a different approach. When I emailed Ungar about his article, he acknowledged that the new numbers “used a third approach” and were more accurate: “It does use a much wider sampling because it includes pretty much all of the businesses in a state (about 95 percent).” Ungar believes the new numbers have problems of their own—he notes correctly that they don’t (yet) lend themselves to state-by-state comparisons and that they still leave Walker behind the pace of job growth needed to reach his ambitious goal. But while there could be minor adjustments to the net jobs number after the Bureau of Labor Statistics reviews the data, Ungar thinks they’re likely to track the Walker number closely. Any major difference, he says, “would mean that Walker is kind of fudging the data—and I don’t think he’d do that.” So much for cooking the books.

What’s more, as my colleague John McCormack reported this week, Dennis Winters, the chief of the Office of Economic Advisers at the Department of Workforce Development, which is responsible for compiling the data, signed the petition to have Walker recalled. So much for cronies.

Barrett is undeterred. Late last week, he released an ad attacking Walker for being a right-wing “rock star” and claiming—still apparently on the basis of data virtually everyone acknowledges are less accurate—that “Wisconsin’s lost more jobs than any other state.”

Walker seemed more amused than angry about the attacks when I sat down with him last week in a conference room at Crites Field, the airport in Waukesha County. “If you’re concerned about jobs, is the mayor of Milwaukee the one you want to put in?” he asks with a laugh. “Taxes and fees have gone up 43 percent [in the city]. Property taxes have gone up 25 percent. Unemployment’s up over 28 percent. It’s the ninth-poorest city in the country. On every measure, there are problems.”

In our 45-minute interview, and in appearances across the state on May 14, the governor seems undaunted by the continuous protest campaign against him for the past 15 months. Sitting at a conference table wearing a French blue shirt, navy slacks, and a red tie, Walker talks candidly about the reforms and the short time he has left to campaign to retain his job.

“We did what we did because it helped us avoid all of the other bad choices,” he explains. “We didn’t have to raise taxes. We didn’t lay off thousands of public employees. We didn’t cut Medicaid—in fact I was actually able to add more money to Medicaid than any governor in Wisconsin history. And we didn’t use budget tricks. If we hadn’t done what we did, there’s no way we’d have been able to avoid one of those, if not all of them.”

For months, polls have shown the state evenly divided about Walker and his reforms. People either love Scott Walker or they hate him. “Most of the time, when we poll on governors, about 20-25 percent have strong opinions,” says pollster Scott Rasmussen. “With Walker, it’s 85 percent and split right down the middle.” But over the past two weeks, Walker has edged into a slight lead. Three surveys taken in the last two weeks show Walker with a lead of at least 5 points—Rasmussen (50-45), Public Policy Polling (50-45), and Marquette Law School (50-44). In the Marquette and PPP polls, just 3 percent of voters were undecided. In Rasmussen, it was 2 percent.

Although the Wisconsin news media have not trumpeted the successful results of Walker’s reforms with quite the fanfare that accompanied the temporarily bad jobs numbers, the steady stream of less-celebrated reports over many months seems to have registered with Wisconsinites. In the Marquette poll, voters were given three choices to describe their view of Walker: “I like what he’s done as governor,” “I like what he’s done but not how he’s done it,” and “I don’t like what he’s done as governor.” Thirty-seven percent said they like what he’s done, 22 percent said they like what he’s done but not how he’s done it, and 38 percent said they don’t like what he’s done. The bottom line: Six in 10 likely voters recognize that the reforms have worked. Walker may not win all their votes, but to lose, he’d need to have a good chunk of voters who like what he’s done vote for someone else on June 5.

Walker is concerned about the likelihood of voter fraud. The Wisconsin legislature passed, and he signed, a voter ID law to prevent such fraud. But a circuit court judge in Dane County issued an injunction blocking the law, so Wisconsin’s liberal voting laws will prevail on June 5. “I’ve always thought in this state, close elections, presidential elections, it means you probably have to win with at least 53 percent of the vote to account for fraud. One or two points, potentially.”

That’s enough to change the outcome of the election. “Absolutely. I mean there’s no question why they went to court and fought [to undo] voter ID.”

Unions and other Walker opponents have certainly shown a willingness to do anything to win. Walker and his family have been harassed regularly. Unions and their backers have marched on Walker’s personal residence in Wauwatosa. His wife has been subjected to repeated verbal harassment. His sons have been targeted on Facebook. Walker himself has been compared to a variety of terrorists and, of course, to Adolf Hitler. He long ago stopped eating out at restaurants and has stepped up security for all of his public appearances.

Kristi LaCroix, a Kenosha teacher who appeared in a pro-Walker ad supporting the reforms, received so many threats that she later said she wished she’d never done the ad. When a student at Two Rivers High School showed up at school wearing a pro-Walker T-shirt, the head of the school’s technical education program, who is also the chairman of the local teachers’ union, sent an email to the business that produced the T-shirt noting that the company does business with the school and threatening a “loss of profits.” A reporter for a liberal Madison newspaper telephoned Ciara Matthews, communications director for the Walker campaign, and expanded the definition of “news” by publishing an entire article about the fact that she worked

at Hooters to put herself through college. Another Walker staffer returned home one day to find his dog defecating blood. The veterinarian who treated the dog—at a cost of \$1,500—told him the most likely culprit was a high dose of rat poison, something he doesn't have in his house.

Despite all of this, Walker has few regrets about his short tenure as governor. He says he's learned from the experience and says that if he had it to do over again he'd spend more time explaining the process to Wisconsinites before moving to implement the reforms. But when I asked him whether there's a part of him that wishes he hadn't pursued the reforms to balance the budget, he's resolute, then reflective. "On substance? No," he says. Then he pauses. "A friend of mine, a supporter, asked me: 'Do you ever think that if you hadn't gone so far you might not be facing recall?' And I thought about it. If I hadn't gone so far, I wouldn't have fixed it. I'm running to win. I'm doing everything in my power to win. But I'm not afraid to lose. To me, it's not worth being in a position like this if you're not willing to do things to fix it. And that means sometimes not worrying about whether or not it's going to help you win or lose."

Still, he wants to win. Speaking to volunteers that afternoon at a Walker "victory center" in Waukesha, the governor acknowledges the new polls and his impressive showing in the primary and offers his supporters a word of caution. "Do not let apathy be the thing that defeats us on June 5," he says, urging the volunteers to keep up their efforts. "There are a lot of hardworking taxpayers in this state who for the past 15, 16 months have been sitting on their hands and saying, 'You know, I don't need a bullhorn, I don't need a protest sign, I can let my words be heard in the election, at the ballot box.' We just need to make sure that all those voices show up on June 5."

Tom Barrett has offered few specifics about his plans for the state if he wins. And while he talks in general terms about wanting to undo what Walker has done, he stands little chance of accomplishing that. Regardless of the outcome of the elections on June 5—which include recall votes on the lieutenant governor and several state senators—Republicans will still have a 59-39-1 majority in the state assembly and will be in a position to block anything Barrett proposes.

And there is an irony. Barrett is running as the candidate who can bring to an end the "civil war" in Wisconsin. But his election, more than anything, would ensure it continues. If he tried to roll back Walker's reforms, he would, by definition, have to refight the earliest battles of the very war he promises to end. And there is no way he can win them.

So the struggle would continue. Further, a Barrett victory would establish a dangerous precedent. If the Democrats succeed in recalling a governor on policy differences, not malfeasance, the Republicans will likely respond in kind. "That's why the recalls are such a joke," says Walker. "That's why putting the mayor in would be so ridiculous. In the next 12 months are we going to go through the same thing all over again? If we win, the lieutenant governor wins, if the senators win—I've got to believe that effectively puts an end to recalls in this state. If we lose, it becomes recall ping-pong. Back-and-forth and back-and-forth."

Recall ping-pong. Not likely to replace beer, cheese, and the Packers as the state's favorite pastime.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Right Turn

Democrats are dreading a Wisconsin wipeout

by Jennifer Rubin

Given current polling, it is not surprising that Democrats in Wisconsin are freaking out. The [Wall Street Journal reports](#): “With little more than two weeks until Wisconsin’s gubernatorial recall election, some Democratic and union officials quietly are expressing fears that they have picked a fight they won’t win and that could leave lingering injuries.” No one is bothering to claim a Scott Walker victory would be insignificant:

The election has taken on significance beyond Wisconsin state politics: Organized labor sees the battle as a major stand against GOP efforts to scale back collective-bargaining rights for public-sector workers, as Mr. Walker did after taking office in 2011. Some Democrats now fear mobilizing Republicans to battle the recall could carry over to help the party — and Republican Mitt Romney — in November’s presidential election. .□.□.

For the left-leaning groups that have spent months trying to oust Mr. Walker, a loss would be a deflating end to a process that began with unions and their allies gathering more than 900,000 signatures to force a recall.

From the start, some in the Democratic Party worried that a Wisconsin recall could drain needed resources, fire up the conservative base and ultimately make it more difficult for Mr. Obama to win the state.

As you might expect, the finger-pointing is well underway on the side that is likely to lose. (“Top Democrats now say that when labor groups first raised the specter of a recall, the party’s officials urged their allies in Wisconsin to reconsider.”)

[Time](#) magazine, under a headline “Why the Coalition Trying to Recall Scott Walker Is Splintering,” likewise reports that “the campaign to recall Walker is sputtering, and the governor has pulled ahead in the polls with a little over two weeks to go until the June 5 election.” It seems that the Republicans out-organized organized labor:

To protect their imperiled star, the GOP has assembled a solid ground-game buoyed by robust fundraising and a clear economic message. By contrast, Walker’s opponents are a fractured force: a loose constellation of Democrats, political-action committees, and labor groups with overlapping goals but spotty coordination. The Democrats have been unable to drive a consistent message, careening from collective bargaining to Walker’s purported dishonesty, the “war on women” and jobs and education.

All of this bodes well for Walker and ultimately for Republicans on the ballot in November, including Mitt Romney and the eventual U.S. Senate nominee. Really, is Obama’s message any clearer than that of the recall forces? In the meantime, Republicans are organized, energized and well aware that if they can put Wisconsin’s 10 electoral votes in Romney’s column, suddenly he’ll have many more options to get to 270 electoral votes.

Right Turn

Obama team messes up on Bain, again

by Jennifer Rubin

On Sunday, Newark Mayor Cory Booker told the country on “Meet The Press” that the president’s attacks on Bain were “nauseating.” If that wasn’t bad enough, the Obama campaign dug itself deeper by trying to clean up the mess. Booker was obliged to record a [four-minute video](#) that didn’t make things much better, as [Politico noted](#). He didn’t renounce, and indeed he repeated, his assertion that negative ads were nauseating.

So the Obama campaign edited what will surely be hereafter called the “Booker hostage video” into a [35-second video](#) that left out the continued criticism of negative campaigning. In sum, as Politico’s Dylan Byers writes:

What gets lost in the edit is the nuance of Booker’s argument. Watching the 35-second video, you would believe that Booker was flip-flopping from his comments on Meet The Press and going on an all-out assault on Romney. In the four-minute video, Booker stands by his comments -- including “nauseating” -- and explains that while he does think Romney’s record is fair game, he remains “frustrated” by the Obama campaign’s negative attacks.

Let’s count the ways Obama’s team has messed this up.

First, the original Bain attack ad was weak, easily rebutted because Romney was not at the steel company at the time of the layoffs depicted in the ad. To make matters worse, the day the ad was released Obama was fundraising among *his* group of investment bankers, resulting in widespread ridicule in the media. And don’t forget Obama’s [former car czar](#) also blasted the ad.

Then along comes Booker and his forced recantation. That only highlighted his searing indictment on “MTP.” Because it wasn’t, in the Obama team’s view, sufficiently convincing, it necessitated the edit. This clown show resembles more a Communist propaganda operation (shall Booker next be airbrushed out of all photos with Obama?) than a supposedly formidable presidential campaign.

The Bain attack now is largely in tatters, savaged by Democrats who don’t want to be the Occupy political party, by the [media](#) (which has begun to [denigrate](#) the [Obama team’s prowess](#)) and of course, by Romney, who has [turned the tables](#) comparing his real experience in the private sector with Obama’s crony capitalism.

This is one more “[shiny object](#)” gambit (e.g. “war on women,” gay marriage) gone wrong. Not only has Obama utterly failed to stain Romney or distract the public from the economy, but he also seems to have convinced even the previously sympathetic media that his campaign is both desperate and inept.

The Obama team has come to resemble Wile E Coyote — each silly plot intended to wipe out his adversary blows up in the plotter’s face. Moreover, with the hyperspeed of a New Media-era campaign Obama is burning through his negative attacks with lightning speed. By July he might actually have to talk about some of the issues.

Right Turn

Ten ways you know the Bain attack is bombing

by Jennifer Rubin

Unless you've really drunk the Kool-Aid, you probably have the idea that the President Obama's campaign has misfired on the Bain attack. How can you tell? Well:

1. [Democratic critics](#) of the Bain attack are piling up.
2. [Politico](#), the ultimate home team paper (root for those to whom you want access), has gone pro-Romney, big time. (h/t David Freddoso)
3. [Chris Matthews](#) is having a meltdown.
4. [The Romney team](#) is sending around headlines with the subject: Not "The Tuesday Headlines President Obama Was Looking For..." And there are lots and lots of them.
5. [Obama campaign manger Ben LaBolt's interview](#) is being sent around — by the Romney team. Anderson Cooper sounds as if the Wall Street Journal editorial board is raking him over the coals.
6. [Lefty blogger Jamelle Bouie](#) is trying to argue that Newt Gingrich just was better at this.
7. [The Huffington Post](#) would rather hype Gov. Scott Walker's impending win in Wisconsin than feature Bain as the top story.
8. [Democrat Mickey Kaus](#) argues that the Bain attack benefits Mitt Romney because it "obviously give[s] him credence as a man who can cut the inefficiencies out of a bloated federal bureaucracy (that still doesn't seem to think it faces in any kind of spending crisis)."
9. [The media](#) is going to town on stories like this from ABC News: "The Obama campaign's latest attack tells the story of workers at an Indiana office supply company who lost their jobs after a Bain-owned company named American Pad & Paper (Ampad) took over their company and drove it out of business. Here's what the Obama Web video doesn't mention: A top Obama donor and fundraiser had a much more direct tie to the controversy and actually served on the board of directors at Richardson, Texas-based Ampad, which makes office paper products. Jonathan Lavine is a long-time Bain Capital executive and co-owner of the Boston Celtics. He is also one of President Obama's most prolific fundraisers." Oh well, then it was smart business and a good faith attempt to save the company.
10. The [New York Times](#) is very nervous about the drop-off in Obama's fundraising among big donors. "Fund-Raising for Romney Eats Into Obama's Edge." (Anyone think the Bain attack will help?) And, you guessed it, the Bain story isn't on the front page.

Contentions

Booker's Nausea Sent Down Memory Hole

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Newark Mayor Cory A. Booker is a rising star in New Jersey whose record running the city has earned him applause on both sides of the political aisle. He's also thought of as something of a superhero after personally rescuing two neighbors from their burning home last month. But as far as the Obama re-election campaign is concerned, he has no more right to think as he pleases than Winston Smith, the hero of George Orwell's *1984*. Just as Smith was forced to concede that two plus two equals five if Big Brother said it did, so Booker tamely walked back his criticism of the president's re-election campaign ads lambasting Mitt Romney's business record.

Speaking on ["Meet the Press" Sunday morning](#), Booker was a political superhero blasting the excesses of both Republicans and Democrats as he decried some conservatives dredging up the Rev. Jeremiah Wright issue and was equally strong on his own party's attempt to demonize Romney's career:

I have to just say, from a very personal level, I'm not about to sit here and indict private equity. To me, it's just we're getting to a ridiculous point in America, especially that I know I live in a state where pension funds, unions and other people are investing in companies like Bain Capital. If you look at the totality of Bain Capital's record, they've done a lot to support businesses, to grow businesses. And this to me, I'm very uncomfortable with. ...

The last point I'll make is this kind of stuff is nauseating to me on both sides. It's nauseating to the American public. Enough is enough. Stop attacking private equity. Stop attacking Jeremiah Wright.

Coming from a prominent young liberal, this was refreshing stuff. Obviously it was a little too refreshing for the White House, but as bad as the "Meet the Press" comments were for the president, what followed didn't help either. By the end of the day, a contrite Booker [posted a video on YouTube](#) walking back his comments about Bain and tamely claiming instead that it was "reasonable" for the Obama campaign to attack Romney on this score. It was as if it were a video from a hostage being held for ransom.

Needless to say, Booker was right the first time he opened his mouth on Sunday. Private equity firms such as Bain are the engine of commerce in this country. Though not all the decisions made by any such firm work out, in the long run they are what builds jobs, not Obama's tax and spend policies. One suspects this is something most Americans understand, which is why the economy is Romney's strongest issue and the president's staff is determined to discredit him.

The embarrassing turnabout won't do much to burnish the superhero politician's reputation for independence, and many liberals will probably never forgive him anyway for an act of heresy, even one quickly recanted. But what probably really ticked off the president was that Booker's original juxtaposition of attacks highlighted that the only way he can be re-elected is by tearing down his opponent. After all, the proposed ad campaign that was supposed to highlight the Rev. Wright issue was not the product of the Romney team or even one of the independent groups closely associated with him. It was something commissioned by Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, who actually renounced the effort as soon as it became public. But the attacks on

Romney's business career are something that is being undertaken directly by the president's campaign.

Tearing down Romney in this fashion is bad enough, but the sinister fashion with which Booker was forced to not just back away from his original position but to directly contradict it speaks volumes about the way the White House seeks to ride herd on Democrats. To diverge from the party line even to decry the nastiness of politics in an even-handed way while stating your support for the president is clearly unacceptable behavior for a Democrat these days. In his recantation video, Booker speaks as though he is about to be sent to a re-education camp if he doesn't get it right and say that it's okay to smear Romney. It should be noted however that the Democratic National Committee wasn't entirely satisfied with the video since it released an [edited version of the recantation](#) that contained his agreement that Romney should be attacked with everything else left out.

One suspects that while Booker and the Democrats would like to send this whole incident down Orwell's "memory hole," the public won't soon forget the mayor's humiliation or how his recantation only buttressed the truths he originally spoke.

Investors.com

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Fallon: I read that the other Saturday, President Obama and Joe Biden spent more than four hours playing golf together. Joe Biden's handicap is 20, while Obama's handicap...is Joe Biden.

Leno: Awkward moment at that George Clooney fundraiser. Just as they're handing the \$15 million check to Obama, China's ambassador steps in and says, "I believe that belongs to us."

Leno: Khloe Kardashian says she wants to avoid the spotlight. So E! Network announces a new reality show, 'Avoiding the Spotlight with Khloe Kardashian.'

Leno: Did you hear about this JP Morgan story? It lost \$2 billion last quarter. That's like 133 Clooney-Obama fundraisers!

Conan: President Obama was on "The View" the other day. That's because they're the only group of women the President trusts his Secret Service agents to be around.

Conan: Friday you could buy Facebook shares. It's perfect for anyone logging on to look at Facebook pictures of a friend eating a sandwich and thinking, "Now, there's a great investment!"

Conan: Newsweek has President Obama on the cover with a headline, "The First Gay President." Apparently, the new Newsweek editor is a third-grade bully.

Leno: So Greece is in dire financial straits. Deeply in debt. The government is in gridlock and dissolving itself. People have lost hope. Yet even so, Greece is in better shape than California.

Fallon: London police will use high-pitched, painful sounds to disperse Olympic crowds if necessary. As 'The View' women put it, 'Looks like we're going to the Olympics.'

Conan: A janitor has just graduated from Columbia University with honors as a Classics major. With this new degree in Classics, he's now qualified to become a janitor.

Fallon: Swedish researchers have discovered a new species of fish. Not to be outdone, Gummi researchers have discovered a new species of bear.

Fallon: The other night, Facebook streamed the classic movie "Casablanca" online. Of course, in the Facebook version, the last line is, "Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Accept?"

Leno: JP Morgan is having such awful financial troubles with multi-billion dollar losses, they're moving their headquarters to Greece.

Fallon: This past weekend's NATO summit in Chicago was to be protested by a group of 1,000 clowns. Or as those clowns put it, "Oh man, we're gonna have to take two cars."

Fallon: CNN's ratings have hit a 15-year low. In fact, things are so bad at CNN, that Wolf Blitzer has started renting out 'The Situation Room' for birthday parties.

Leno: Widespread disappointment over Facebook shares on their first day of NASDAQ trading. Experts said they'd take off like a rocket. But it was more like a North Korean rocket.



