

...President Obama calls governor's action 'an assault on unions'

(From Page 1)

ing a 24-hour-vigil inside the state capitol building, a sleeping bag protest that was still under way two weeks later. Protests outside the capitol grew day after day, reaching 100,000 two weeks after the bill was introduced. The protests spread to 66 cities and every state capital in the nation.

Here is the remarkable chronology of the fight-back movement:

Friday, Feb. 11: Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker introduces SS SB 11, a bill that would eviscerate public employee collective bargaining rights.

Sunday, Feb. 13: 150 University of Wisconsin students protest outside the state capitol building.

Tuesday Feb. 15: The Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin Legislature opens a hearing on the bill at 10 a.m. AFSCME members bus in from at least seven Wisconsin cities and are joined by hundreds of Madison high school students who leave school to protest. Over 10,000 march and rally outside the capitol building, while 3,000 more pack the halls inside, signing up by the hundred to testify at the hearing, which runs until 3 a.m. Republican leaders cut off debate and close the hearing, but Democrats continue taking public testimony in another room, which gives protesters the right to stay overnight in the capitol. Thus begins a 24-hour-a-day occupation of the state capitol building, which continues at press time 13 days

later. Current and former members of the Green Bay Packers, America's only fan-owned non-profit pro sports team, issue a statement, nine days after their Super Bowl win: "Public workers are Wisconsin's champions every single day and we urge the governor and the State Legislature to not take away their rights."

Wednesday Feb. 16: Madison public schools close as teachers call in sick. The protest outside the capitol, now joined by teachers, students and parents, swells to 20,000. [Madison schools remain closed for three more days.] A U.S. Labor Department official warns the Legislature that under 13(c), an obscure provision of federal transit law, Wisconsin could lose federal transportation money if it denies transit workers their collective bargaining rights.

Thursday, Feb. 17: By now at least 15 school districts around the state are closed due to a spreading teacher sick-out. Capitol protesters — now numbering 25,000 — block the door to the state Senate chambers. All 14 Wisconsin state Senate Democrats flee to Illinois, leaving the Senate one member short of the 20-member quorum it needs to vote on the bill. President Barack Obama, in an interview on Milwaukee TV station WTMJ, says the Wisconsin proposal seems like "an assault on unions."

Friday, Feb. 18: Rev. Jesse Jackson and national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka speak outside the capitol as 40,000 people rally. The

Madison school district asks a judge to order teachers back to work, since teachers strikes are illegal in Wisconsin; the judge refuses.

Saturday, Feb. 19: Outside the capitol, an estimated 60,000 protest the Walker bill, while several thousand, organized by Americans for Prosperity, rally in support of Walker.

Sunday, Feb. 20: It's snowing in Madison, but thousands continue to rally outside of the capitol. Inside, demonstrators by now have organized cleanup details, set up a system of marshals, and brought in food.

Monday, Feb. 21: The capitol is ringed by 40,000 protesters. Madison-based South Central Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, unanimously passes a resolution endorsing a general strike if the bill becomes law.

Tuesday, Feb. 22: Madison teachers return to school voluntarily. The Wisconsin Assembly (lower house) takes up the bill. In part to delay passage, Assembly Democrats propose over 100 amendments and insist on their right to debate them. MoveOn.org, backed by the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, Service Employees, and over 40 other organizations, announces plans to rally in every state capital on Feb. 26.

Wednesday, Feb. 23: Gov. Walker takes a phone call from a man he thinks is David Koch, a well-known right-wing billionaire who contributes to Republican causes. The caller turns out to be a progressive blogger, who records the phone call and puts it on

line. In the recording, Walker says he "thought about" planting troublemakers among the Capitol protesters, underscores his refusal to meet with unions, and gives details of his plan to trick Senate Democrats into returning to the state.

Thursday, Feb. 24: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issues a strong statement supporting workers' collective bargaining rights.

Friday, Feb. 25: At 1 a.m., after more than 60 hours of debate, Republican leaders in the Wisconsin Assembly abruptly call a vote on the bill and declare the bill passed before some Assembly Democrats even have a chance to vote. Thus ends the longest

continuous Assembly session in Wisconsin history, with Assembly Democrats shouting "Shame!" and denouncing the maneuver as illegal. But the bill can't move forward in the Senate, since not a single Democrat has returned from Illinois. Supporters of Gov. Walker announce plans to close the capitol over the weekend and evict the protesters. The head of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association urges the governor to keep the capitol open, and calls on police union members from across the state to come to the capitol to sleep among the throngs of union supporters.

Saturday, Feb. 26: Up to 100,000 (Turn to Page 12)

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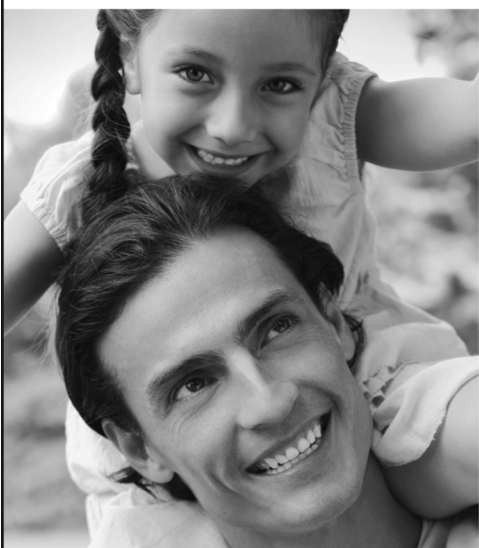
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