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## Recall targets Wis. Gov. Walker, reversal of union rights

By JUDY KEEN

MONROE, Wis. – The raucous protests at the state Capitol ended long ago, but the firestorm ignited by Gov. Scott Walker last year when he moved to cut collective-bargaining rights for most state workers still rages.

The debate will peak but probably not end Tuesday when voters decide whether to recall the Republican governor and replace him with Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, a Democrat who lost to Walker in the 2010 gubernatorial election. If Walker is recalled, he would be the third governor in U.S. history to be removed from office.

Walker said the union legislation, which became law in March 2011, was necessary to erase a \$137 million budget deficit. It requires most state employees who belong to unions to pay part of their health insurance and pension costs and limits pay raises.

Barrett has said that if he's elected, he'll call a special legislative session to repeal the measure. Recalls of four Republican state senators also are on Tuesday's ballot.

People in this town of 10,820 are "fairly revved up" about the recall, says Travis Zimmerman, 42, who works at a lumber yard. "The outcome will have some effect on other states' approach to the issue of budget cuts," he says. He'll vote to keep Walker on the job.

Madison resident Susan Bell, 57, who's visiting a friend here, won't. "He's got to go," she says. "He has undermined this state's commitment to good government to make himself famous."

Walker's initiative made him a national figure, prompted other states — including Ohio and Indiana — to consider legislation limiting union rights, and mobilized organized labor and other groups to collect almost 1 million signatures to qualify the recall for the ballot.

If Walker survives, "even Democratic governors facing fiscal problems will be a little bit emboldened to take on public-sector unions," says John McAdams, a political scientist at Milwaukee's Marquette University. The recall battle has made voters "more politically attuned," which could increase turnout in November, when Wisconsin is expected to be a key presidential battleground, he says.

The recall "puts unions and Democrats to the test and forces unions to spend a lot of money," says Marc Dixon, a Dartmouth College sociologist who studies the labor movement. "It depletes key resources in a key state that looks like it's going to be close" in the presidential election.

The flow of campaign donations to Walker from outside Wisconsin underscores the high stakes of Tuesday's vote. He has raised more than \$30 million this year, much of it from out of state. Barrett has raised more than \$4 million since joining the race in March, most of it from Wisconsin donors.

A Marquette University Law School poll that was released Wednesday showed Walker ahead, 52% to 45%. The poll's margin of error was +/-3.7 percentage points.

People here are as divided as the rest of the state. Monroe is the seat of Green County, which Barrett carried by just 176 votes in 2010. Sign painter Chuck Heffelfinger, 60, will vote to keep Walker in office. Efforts to remove him are "sour grapes," he says. "Whenever anyone tries to regain control of the budget, sacrifices have to be made. It boils down to responsibility."

Tiffany Elliott, 24, a single mom who works at a downtown store, will vote to oust the governor. “What he’s doing is wrong,” she says. She worries that schools will lose good teachers and wishes funds spent to hold the recall had been spent on state services instead.

Other people here are torn. Erik Grinnell, 23, liked Walker at first, in part because of the governor’s support for a new law that allows residents to carry concealed weapons. Now, says Grinnell, who owns construction and engineering companies, he disagrees “with a lot of the stuff on education.” He hasn’t decided how he’ll vote.

Sharon Riese, 67, and her husband, David Riese, 71, a retired physician, plan to vote for Walker. Their votes will be protests of the recall process, not endorsements of his policies.

“The recall should only be used when there’s an egregious action” by an elected official, he says.

Joshua Spivak of the Hugh L. Carey Institute for Government Reform at New York’s Wagner College, who writes The Recall Elections Blog (recallelections.blogspot.com), says there were 151 recall elections in 2011 at all levels of local and state government.

High-profile recalls such as Wisconsin’s, he says, could generate more of them. “By seeing the recall in action,” he says, “other people are more interested in using them.”