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**MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS ON FIGHTING INCOME INEQUALITY AT  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF WISCONSIN FOUNDERS DAY GALA**

*Remarks as Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you [Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair] Mike Tate for that wonderful introduction!

It's been a joy to meet you Mike, and all of the distinguished women and men that make up the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

I had the pleasure of taking in a Brewers game with Mayor Tom Barrett last night. I was struck by how many people kept coming up to the mayor to thank him for his service, and to offer good wishes.

I got to quite a few baseball games in my city of New York, and I gotta admit – the reception isn't always that cordial. People recognize me all right – but often times our exchanges are limited to a few choice words...or even a particular finger!

Thank you to all the speakers who took the stage tonight to share your powerful words and ideas. You've made it very clear why this party, and this state, is such a powerful force for change.

And as you know, that spirit...that drive for something better...has a long, rich history in Wisconsin.

About a century ago, after big corporations had put so much money and influence in the hands of an elite few, it was progressive legends like Robert La Follette who set out to take on the entrenched interests and lift up everyday people instead.

“Fighting Bob” – both as Governor and as U.S. Senator – gave voice to those who so desperately needed it – a fierce advocate for workers' right to organize, women's right to vote, the minimum wage, and progressive taxation.

La Follette understood the danger that inequality posed to ALL people.

And he spoke about it in bold and direct terms, saying QUOTE: “The supreme issue, involving all others, is the encroachment of the powerful few upon the rights of the many.” END QUOTE

If he were with us today, and saw the concentration of wealth and power that currently infects our politics, I know he'd be fighting louder and harder and more passionately than ever.

Wisconsin also has a rich tradition when it comes to national elections.

In the last 50 years, no Democratic Presidential nominee has won the White House without winning Wisconsin.

And there's a reason for that.

This is a state where you understand that political power must be SOUGHT and then USED – used to help people...to create policies must honor work and not just wealth.

Wisconsinites know progressive change comes not from the top DOWN, but from the grassroots UP.

In that, and so many other ways, Wisconsinites embody all that is good and right about our Democratic Party.

But here's the thing.

Today, too many families in Wisconsin – and all across America -- are suffering under the weight of a crisis – a crisis of inequality.

And as wealth becomes hyper-concentrated at the top of the economic ladder, our middle class has eroded.

The statistics tell the story:

A typical American family, in real income terms, is making LESS today than they were a quarter century ago.

The wealthiest one percent captured 91% of all the income gains since the Great Recession ended.

We have the greatest income disparity since the 1920s – and it's getting worse.

Now, make no mistake: a large part this crisis stems from a relentless assault on workers' right to organize.

And you don't have to be an economist to know this: labor unions are the **backbone of America's middle class.**

If anyone tells you otherwise, remind them of this:

For decades, organized labor has been under attack by the radical right. And for decades, our middle class has been shrinking and struggling.

Lemme tell you: **that is no coincidence.**

Fact is, unions in America help raise wages and benefits across whole sectors of economies – for workers who are unionized, and those who are not.

They fight to see to it that hard work is VALUED.

And they aren't afraid to say the truth: that income inequality will get worse if the folks at the TOP **call all the shots.**

You get that... Democrats across America get that.... and people across Wisconsin get that.

But right now, Wisconsin has a governor who seems to live in an alternate reality.

Elected and re-elected by peddling a series of falsehoods, he told you teachers were the enemy, unions were the problem, and that government/progressive ideas were the roadblock.

He told you up was down, and down was up. And as a result, Scott Walker is pulling Wisconsin **backwards**.

You see, Governor Walker is part of a dangerous breed of Republicans...a group actively working to dismantle the foundation for middle class life.

They wage that war with policies that deprive workers of the right to organize ... policies like so-called “right to work” legislation... policies that undermine the chance for workers to negotiate better wages and benefits.

Governor Walker’s economic philosophy is pretty simple. Call it trickle down, call it voodoo economics, or just call it what it is: **rewarding wealth over work**.

He thinks that if you give even MORE tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthy – and then balance budgets on the backs of working people – then, somehow, magically, things will get better for everyone.

He’s wrong. **Dead...wrong.**

Want proof? Just look at your neighbor to the west.

Today, Minnesota’s economy is stronger than Wisconsin’s.

Unemployment is almost a full point lower. In recent years, median household income in Minnesota increased by \$3,500 more than that of Wisconsin.

Imagine what a typical Wisconsin family could do with \$3,500 more in their pockets.

Imagine how life-changing it would be for thousands of unemployed Wisconsinites to find a job that supports their family.

You see, in MINNESOTA, they’ve got a DEMOCRAT as Governor.

And instead of being guided by Scott Walker’s brand of trickle-down trickery, Governor Dayton took the opposite approach – investing in education and childcare and infrastructure, while asking the wealthy to pay their fair share.

Seems like Scott Walker should take a day trip to St. Paul and learn a lesson or two about how to run an economy – as soon as he gets off his conference call with the Koch Brothers!

Instead, Governor Walker has gone his own way. Waging war on unions.

Slashing HUNDREDS OF MILLION from education. First, state aid to public schools; next, the renowned public university system, which has been the gateway to the middle class for generations of Wisconsinites.

But it didn’t end there. There was also cutting child care.

And, of course, handing massive new tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthy.

The result? A recent analysis by Pew Foundation found that Wisconsin’s middle class is shrinking at a faster rate than ANY other state’s.

Now listen...I’m not saying Scott Walker SET OUT to destroy Wisconsin’s middle class. But if that WERE his mission, I can’t think of a damn thing he’d had done differently!

It's no wonder why the latest polls show Governor Walker's approval sinking to new lows.

The people of Wisconsin can see beyond his pleasant smile and reassuring words. He tries to play the everyman – then he stabs the everyman in the back

But the people are seeing his POLICIES, and where he's taking the state – not forward – this state's proud motto -- but backward!

As Democrats, we KNOW there's a smarter way to govern.

To tackle income inequality, we need progressive policies that honor WORK over wealth... policies that Washington can do something about right NOW.

For starters, let's once and for all END tax breaks for companies that ship AMERICAN jobs overseas.

Let's use the money we are GIVING AWAY to those companies and use it to invest in THIS country – in our roads, bridges, and mass transit...in cities and towns all across AMERICA.

That's exactly what President Obama has been fighting for – tooth and nail – against the right-wing Republicans in Congress. But like clockwork, the radical right has sounded a single note: No, no, and no.

It's like Washington Republicans can't find the will to say YES to anyone but the Koch Brothers, the Tea Party, and Grover Norquist.

But I digress.

To honor work over wealthy, there's another simple policy we can adopt right now.

Raise the minimum wage so that it keeps up with the cost of living. Nobody who works full time should be forced to live in poverty! It's time to FIGHT FOR \$15!

And one final policy that would make things a little more fair for working people. Stand up to the Wall Street money managers, and close the carried interest loophole!

There's no reason that a hedge fund billionaire should pay a lower tax rate than the woman who cleans his beach house, or the guy who pilots his private jet.

Those are issues that unite Democrats. But I know we have our share of differences, too. That's okay. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about them.

In recent days, there's been a lot of talk about passing Fast-Track trade authority for the new Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty.

I believe that would be a huge mistake.

I believe the American people should have a say in trade agreements – especially massive deals that can mean the difference between countless jobs being CREATED in America...or being SHIPPED overseas.

I believe that we should be rewriting the rules to give working people MORE of a say... rules that protect American jobs and American consumers... rules that rein in the excesses of giant multi-national corporations and their relentless pursuit to put profits before people.

On all those counts, Fast Track is a raw deal for American workers.

And since this is a political event, let me go beyond the idea of a bad policy – and talk about elections for a moment.

Think ahead to the next election...the day that voters get to judge who's on their side...and who they're not quite sure about.

They KNOW that Republicans are out to fatten the wallets of the already rich and well-connected...to pave the path for more corporate power, and less investment in people.

For Democrats to forget our core progressive beliefs... to shade the line between what WE stand for and what the REPUBLICANS stand for ...that's a recipe for repeating the same muddled message that cost Democrats so many seats in 2014.

I, for one, am not going to sit by and let that happen again in 2016. And I know YOU won't either.

We must stand up for specific, **progressive** solutions to income inequality – even when it's hard.

So in the months ahead, we need to raise our voices about the type of country we want to be.

Do we want to be a country where we celebrate the concentration of massive wealth and power...or do we want to BUILD a country where we offer economic opportunity to ALL of our people?

The nation will be watching.

Because make no mistake, Wisconsin WILL be a battleground in 2016. And the hard work of the people in this room will be **critical** to determining the future of our nation.

So let's wake up every day for the next 18 months ready to FIGHT.

FIGHT for an economy that works for working people;

FIGHT for the right of working people to organize;

FIGHT for policies that put American workers ahead of multinational corporations.

We are at a moment in history where we can go exactly one of two ways. We can see the crisis of income inequality as intractable, throw up our hands, and tell ourselves that nothing can be done.

OR, we can march FORWARD – speaking bluntly about progressive policies that lift the floor for working people; help working parents; and telling the wealthiest one percent that they have a responsibility to help those who struggle to get ahead.

That's the America we believe in...an America of opportunity and promise.

And that's the society that we can and must build together...from Milwaukee, to New York City, to cities and states all across the nation.

So let's get to work!

Thank you so much.

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