

Education and Ethics: Doyle's Worst Nightmare

Contributed by Lorenzo Vicini

The question was raised four years ago to then-Attorney General Jim Doyle as he hoped to win the race for governor: "What will you do to make tuition affordable for UW students?" He replied, "I'm going to make sure the university is affordable for every single student." Asked if that included supporting a ten percent cap in the budget, Doyle quickly gave his support even adding that "frankly, ten percent seems a little high to me." College students will go to the polls this November in hopes of electing a governor who will help our financial and educational situation. It's funny how things have changed since Doyle's statements four years ago. What has happened since that commitment? Students in the UW system have seen their tuition increase not only ten or twenty percent but more than fifty percent according to a Journal Sentinel study! Doyle did keep his word to try and make our universities affordable to every student though — he tried to give in-state tuition to illegal immigrants (note the word "illegal"). Furthermore, Doyle managed to decrease tuition for non-Wisconsin residents by \$2000. I sense something wrong here. How is it that a governor who is supposed to be fighting for Wisconsin and its students is actually helping out everyone but native Wisconsinites?

This education issue is vital to the future of Wisconsin. At a time when the state is struggling to retain graduates, Doyle is making it harder for Wisconsin students to have affordable tuition costs. Do we simply allow Doyle to point the finger elsewhere as to the reasons for significant tuition increases? Obviously, Doyle and his campaign quickly blamed the UW Board of Regents for the increases. However, let's remember who signs the budget that approves these increases, Governor Doyle. It isn't the UW Board of Regents — it's you! The point is that Doyle promised students four years ago that he would do everything he could to protect our rising tuition costs. Yet, all he's done is just allowed it to balloon to over fifty percent as well as give access and aid to everyone but students from within the state. If Doyle's solution hasn't worked, it's only fair to look at what gubernatorial candidate Mark Green proposes to do. According to Green's proposal, the solution is part of an overarching UW system reform. At its most basic form, the plan would include capping tuition at the rate of inflation. In addition, Green stated his intent to eliminate any proposed diversity tuition increases. Lastly, any increase that occurs with tuition would likewise increase financial aid for students. The question of whether or not it will work is yet to be seen. However, as it stands, Mark Green's plan seems reasonable — especially after seeing Doyle's promises go down the drain. So, if you can imagine Doyle's backtrack on education, you have to be ready for his statements about ethics. In his most recent debate, Doyle was asked, "What is your plan to strengthen the people's trust in Wisconsin government, assuring them the common good of all people will take precedence over special interests and party power?" Remarkably, Doyle threw out this gem on government ethics: "I hold myself to the highest standards of ethics and I expect everyone around me to do the same." Apparently, the highest standards of ethics are comparable to our very own Student Association's code of ethics. In other words, Doyle's administration has had about as much ethical behavior as a Clinton or Nixon administration. Chiefly (and most likely responsible for his election), was Doyle's Kerry-esque flip-flop concerning the legislative oversight of gaming. Initially, Doyle was against such a measure; yet, after receiving almost \$1 million in contributions from casinos, he approved the largest expansion of gaming in Wisconsin history. I wonder what could have changed his mind so convincingly. But the casino issue wasn't the only ethical problem hitting our Governor's administration these past four years. Doyle also tried to influence the state's Election Board. As a result, the Journal Sentinel was able to uncover the truth and even its somewhat liberal editorial board denounced Doyle's attempts. Furthermore, Doyle's problems with Travelgate, the sale of nuclear power plants and direct links to campaign donations are just a few of the many ethical issues that he has had to face and provide damage control. And we haven't even touched the rest of his administration — remember our Attorney General getting caught driving a state vehicle while intoxicated? Way to represent our state and our people Mr. Doyle and Co. The attempt of Doyle and his campaign to attach ethical problems in the form of campaign contributions to the Green campaign is quite sad. It's hard to point out the stick in someone else's eye when you have a log in yours. The state of Wisconsin has given Mr. Doyle four years to keep his promises; yet, we have seen nothing but lies and scandal. Students continually see rising tuition costs with no end in sight as long as Doyle is willing to approve them. Furthermore, an administration as ethically oblivious as this one doesn't deserve another term in office. While there are numerous other issues that are at play in this election (namely taxes), the point is that the most important issues affecting students are at stake in this election. Do we want to continue to pay more and more for higher education while others are taking advantage of our increases? The choice is yours. Make a difference and make a change. Wisconsin depends on it and so does your checkbook.