



## Obama focuses on economy, women's issues in Milwaukee stop to boost Burke

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MILWAUKEE -- President Barack Obama hammered the message that Wisconsin lags the nation in job growth since the Great Recession and stressed a theme of women's equality in a fiery speech on behalf of gubernatorial candidate Mary Burke on Tuesday.

"Over the past four and a half years, America's businesses have created more than 10 million new jobs," Obama told an overflow crowd at North Division High School in inner-city Milwaukee. "Wisconsin lags the country when it comes to job growth. The country as a whole is doing better; Wisconsin's not doing so good."

### Additional info

- [Transcript: Remarks by the president at Burke for governor rally](#)
- [Transcript: Remarks by the president to overflow crowd](#)

Obama stressed his and his wife's modest upbringings at the event, held in one of Milwaukee's poorest neighborhoods. He said a good education proved the key to a better life and he drew some of the loudest cheers when he mentioned the minimum wage.

"Mary Burke doesn't believe that the minimum wage serves no purpose, as one Republican said," Obama said, in a reference to comments made by Gov. Scott Walker. "She knows it's (for) some hard-working mom who's working hard and having to take care of the kids and she's trying to make ends meet. It would make a difference for her."

Burke is "going to give Wisconsin a raise," Obama said.

Republicans, meanwhile, used the visit to tie Burke to Obama, whose job approval rating was upside down in the Marquette University Law School Poll released two weeks ago.

"There's a clear choice this November, we can move Wisconsin forward by re-electing Governor Walker, or send the state backward by voting for more of the same failed Obama policies Mary Burke supports," said RNC Chair Reince Priebus.

Without naming him, Obama took a jab at Wisconsin state Sen. Glenn Grothman, who's running in the 6th Congressional District, over comments he made regarding pay for women.

“When Republicans in Washington said no to a national fair pay law, one Republican running for office in this state right now said, ‘Well, you could argue that money is more important for men,’” Obama said, referring to remarks made by Grothman.

“Do you believe that? We need to strengthen the middle class for the 21st century -- that means we need leaders from the 21st century,” Obama said to loud cheers.

Obama also talked about Burke's jobs plan, which has taken heat from Republicans over parts that appeared in other candidates' plans.

“Here’s a good thing: she understands that ideas that create jobs, they shouldn’t be judged as to whether they’re Democratic or Republican, but whether or not they work,” Obama said. “She’s a business person, she’s a practical person.”

Before the main event, Obama addressed an overflow room at the school, imploring the crowd to vote Nov. 4.

"You have to go reach out and tell people that they’ve got to exercise their franchise, they’ve got to be good citizens," he said. "They’ve got to take responsibility to make sure that more jobs are created in Wisconsin, more opportunities created for Wisconsin, that young people have a better education in Wisconsin. All that will happen, but it depends on them voting, and you need to be out there motivating them. All right?"

Burke, who introduced the president to the main rally, stressed her own family background, saying her great-grandparents were farmers and her grandfather was a mailman. She also said Walker was "standing in the way of a decent minimum wage" and referenced a comment he made on the state's jobs situation.

“Governor Walker, he just doesn’t get it. In his own words, he said, 'we don’t have a jobs problem,' but he’s wrong,” she said. “In Milwaukee County, we’ll need six more years to get back the jobs lost in the Great Recession and under Scott Walker – that’s a jobs problem.”

Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele also spoke, saying he knows “it’s possible for a Democrat to take over a job that Scott Walker had and make an improvement.”

Abele said since he took over as county exec from Walker, the county has gone

from a “fiscal mess” to lowering crime, introducing educational programs at the House of Corrections, expanding child support collections and better managing the state’s Family Care program for the elderly and disabled.

Abele got in his own digs at Walker by saying, “We need a governor who isn’t wasting all of our time seeking fights and making enemies, but looking for allies and finding solutions.”

He added: “Mary works hard to get along with everyone she can.”

Other speakers were Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore and Dem AG candidate Susan Happ.

Barrett and Happ both said Republicans were trying to suppress the vote with voter ID laws, and urged voters to be all the more motivated to show up at the polls.

Happ also stressed that both she and Burke could make state history by winning their races.

“This is an exciting year in Wisconsin. For the first time we have women on the ticket for governor and for attorney general,” said Happ. “One of us rides a Trek, the other rides a Harley, but we’re on the same road, the road to making Wisconsin a place where people, not politics are a priority.”

Before the speech Obama stopped for a small DNC fundraiser at Umami Moto Restaurant in Milwaukee.

Some people in attendance, most of whom had waited several hours in long lines outdoors, also mentioned their desire to see a woman as Wisconsin’s governor.

Geisha Brisby, a nurse from Milwaukee, said, “By nature, we women have more compassion in our hearts. That’s why I think she makes a good candidate – because she’s a woman.”

“Scott Walker has no idea of what poverty is like,” Brisby said. “He should spend just one or two days down here in the heart of ghetto Milwaukee, maybe he’d change his mind.”

Pam Smith of Milwaukee said she’s hoping her personal job situation would improve under a different governor. “You know how Governor Walker says in that ad he’s got jobs for everyone that wants one? I’ve been out of work since 2009 and I’m still waiting.” Smith said she attended a tech school to become a medical assistant, but has had no luck.

Tyrone Palmer said he'd like to see not only a woman governor, but said, "After having the first black president, it's time for the first woman president, too." Palmer, a retired steelworker, said he knows that Burke worked for a family business, "so I'm pretty sure she hired people from poorer situations."

But Palmer's son, Lamont Palmer, an unemployed warehouse worker, said he's skeptical that Burke, with her wealth, can relate to low-income families. Still, he said, "I believe I will vote for her, I'll give her a chance."

Maxine Dancer, a resident of Pewaukee, was blunt: "I just want Scott Walker out of there. He hasn't done anything I appreciate."

-- *By Kay Nolan*  
*For WisPolitics.com*