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At state Dem event, Maryland gov takes on Walker

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Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley touted Mary Burke's candidacy for Wisconsin's chief executive, but largely directed his remarks at Gov. Scott Walker, calling him "a devoted follower of trickle-down economics if ever there was one."

O'Malley, who spoke Saturday evening in Milwaukee at the Democratic Party of Wisconsin's 2014 Founder's Day Gala, said, "Prosperity doesn't trickle down from the top and it never has."

Like Walker, O'Malley's name has been mentioned as a possible 2016 presidential candidate.

Afterward, O'Malley told WisPolitics.com he's thinking about a run.

"It's something I'm looking at," he said.

Asked if he is waiting to see if Hillary Clinton will enter the race, O'Malley replied, "Not really. What I've said in the past is that any of us who feel we have something to offer our country that would help to shape a better future should make that offering. I'm much more focused on our country's direction and our country's choices than I am on any field of candidates."

Asked if he'd relish a potential match-up against Walker, O'Malley chuckled and said, "I think Mary Burke is going to do a fine job of that."

In his speech, O'Malley compared his tenure to Walker's with a point-by-point scathing analysis.

"Because we do believe in the dignity of work, we actually expanded collective bargaining rights," said O'Malley. "We don't attack and belittle our teachers; we support our teachers. And because climate change is as real as physics itself, we have doubled renewable energy, accelerated energy conservation and reduced the amount of gas emissions."

O'Malley said his state last week increased the minimum wage to \$10.10 because "when workers earn more, businesses have more and better customers."

"Meanwhile, here in Wisconsin, Scott Walker is fighting efforts to raise the minimum wage -- dismissing those efforts as, quote, 'political grandstanding.'"

O'Malley added.

"In Maryland, we have chosen to do more, not less, to create new jobs in emerging industries like life science, biotech, green technology and renewable energy," said O'Malley, who bragged that Maryland has the second fastest rate of job growth in its region and has been named the nation's No. 1 state for innovation and entrepreneurship.

"When Scott Walker first ran for election, he said it was going to be all about moving Wisconsin's economy forward," O'Malley said. "Instead, he's been all about holding Wisconsin back -- rolling back workers' rights, rolling back voters' rights, rolling back women's rights, even repealing equal pay for women. What does that have to do with creating jobs?"

Wisconsin can do better with Mary Burke, O'Malley said.

Burke to Walker: 'Game on!'

Burke gave a fiery speech at the event, declaring she's not afraid to take on the well-funded GOP incumbent.

"Walker's game plan is to raise tens of millions of dollars from out-of-state millionaires and billionaires and to buy our governorship," said Burke. "They will throw at me every lie and dirty trick in the book. This is a tough fight -- the lies, the attack ads, the millions of dollars from super PACs. But I can tell you, not only am I not intimidated, I'm having fun. So, my message to Scott Walker: 'Game on.'"

Burke expressed confidence about her chances in November.

"I would not have gotten into this if I wasn't going to win," said Burke. "I have a game plan for winning, I have a team that knows how to win, I am committed to raising the kind of money to get my message out."

Burke said she'll win because Wisconsinites are disappointed with a low job creation and personal income growth under Walker.

"Walker has turned a deaf ear to the people of Wisconsin and we know it," she said. "A recent survey showed that nearly 60 percent of people don't think the governor cares about people like them."

"From Monroe to Neillsville to Brillion to Milwaukee, people are frustrated with politicians," said Burke. "They're working harder and harder but still living paycheck to paycheck."

Burke also talked about her personal history, saying that while growing up,

"There was no room for wimps in the Burke household."

She said that at age 10, she and her siblings were tapped to help build a walkway in front of the family home. "It seemed like every week that summer, my mother piled my sister Kathy, my brother John and me into our used, green Buick station wagon and drove down into the quarry. We loaded up the station wagon with stone and got in line with the trucks to get weighed. To this day, we kid our mom about the hard labor she made us do. Her comeback? It built character."

Burke said she's proud of the role she played in her family's business, Trek Bicycle. She said that as state commerce secretary under then-Gov. Jim Doyle, she helped prevent the closing of a mill in Park Falls, saving 300 jobs. But seven years later, she said, Wisconsin now has 73,000 fewer people at work.

"That's 73,000 families who today are struggling to make ends meet," Burke said. "Unfortunately, we have a governor who seems more focused with advancing his own career than with putting people back to work."

Among other speakers at the Democratic event was U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore of Milwaukee, who blasted Wisconsin Republicans for citing religion yet restricting early voting to weekdays, preventing people from voting after attending Sunday services.

"They pray on the Sabbath and then prey on the poor," said Moore of Walker and GOP state lawmakers.

Three Dem candidates for state attorney general – Susan Happ, Ismael Ozanne and Jon Richards – gave campaign speeches. Happ said she could win over swing voters and moderate Republicans. She noted she was the first Democrat to be elected district attorney in heavily Republican Jefferson County since 1938, when Franklin Roosevelt was president.

Richards, a state representative from Milwaukee, said he's the only candidate with a record of ending easy access to guns by criminals and declared, "NRA, I'm not afraid of you."

Ozanne, who is Dane County DA, said he has the most experience as a prosecutor and as a longtime supporter of labor – including going to bat to challenge Act 10. "I was there when the bomb dropped – you don't have to worry where I'll be when the next shoe drops," he said.

-- *By Kay Nolan*
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