

# Governor Scott Walker

12/15/2017

Interviewed by Roger Schultz

Transcribed by Adam Cieply

Edited by Bianca Milligan & Leah Cohen

Schultz: I'm Roger Schultz, retired Lieutenant General, United States Army. We're joined here today by the Governor of Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker. Governor, thanks for being with us today.

Walker: Our pleasure.

Schultz: This is a special day, we're honored to have you here in Eagle River. I've been to Wisconsin a lot, Governor, but I've not been to the North Woods.

Walker: Yeah, it's a beautiful place, particularly in the winter.

Walker: It's like uh... It's like God put a nice white blanket out for ya.

Schultz: Correct. So I could tell, as soon as I... I had a tour this morning early. They said, "Listen, you need to see this community". So, you know, we had breakfast at a local restaurant, and they said, "You got to come back here one day." And so I have dates this next summer where they want me to come back and do some serious fishing.

Walker: It's a great place all four seasons. I'll be back in a month for the snowmobile derby. In the summer, it's a great place to fish at. You do canoeing, it's just a lot of great... you're just hiking around. I love it.

Schultz: So governor, you're growing up, what prepared you to be the chief executive in the state of Wisconsin?

Walker: Well I grew up in a small town, actually a lot like Eagle River, where we're at today, but on the other end of the state. We were near the Illinois border, in Wallworth County, and um, I had the good fortune, my parents started me in scouts early, and I ultimately became and am today, still an Eagle Scout. And so I think a lot of the leadership training I got from scouting helped me out tremendously. Sort of stuff I often tell folks who aren't familiar with scouts, you get the kind of leadership training corporations pay to send their top executives to. I got it as a young man. And then, I always thought I would go into business, but when I was in my... going into my senior year, that summer my small town, the American Legion post there sent me to a program the American Legion has across the country, in our state it happens to be called Badger Boy State, and I

was there. I was elected statewide and it's a week long program at a college campus where you start out on your...on your floor as a... as a city. You start in your dorm as a county, and eventually the whole group of the young citizen's act as a state. And it's really a chance to interact and act hands on--- experience into government. I was honored to be one of the two young men that went to Boys Nation, in our nation's capital; first time I'd ever been there, and after that I got the bug for public service. So those things probably as much as anything prepared me, not only for government but really for leadership that was needed in this position.

Schultz: So as you think about your role as governor today, you... you have the [United States] Army and the Air National Guard in Wisconsin--- subordinate to you; treasure, no doubt. A resource like any... unlike any other. So--- as you think back, just talking about the--- guard as a local force, or a state force, or a federal force, and--- so--- how do you balance all of those priorities, and I understand that there is a variety of moving priorities there.

Walker: Well one of the things I'm most proud of is as governor, I... I get to be commander in chief of the ten thousand strong men and women of the Wisconsin National Guard. Our...our airmen and our soldiers, in fact I carry with me all the time, I've...I've gone out with a number of our units, in fact I just... we just saw a couple weeks ago the 128<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, just deployed all throughout, not only the Middle East, but in Asia, Africa, and a little bits going up to Europe and to the theaters there. I...I back a couple months ago, had the chance to see the 115<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, and about 270 of airmen over at Kunsan Air Base in the Republic of Korea, and I've had the honor of traveling around the world, from Afghanistan, Middle East, you name it. And I'm just so proud to see the work that they do around the globe at the...at the command of our nations--- Commander in Chief, the President, but to see that dual responsibility. The...the National Guard, as much as anybody in the military, and I love active duty, I love the Reserve, but the Guard really, essentially, is what our founders intended. They are citizen soldiers, they are people who step up in times of need within the state. They're under my command, and we've had, in this part of the state and elsewhere, we've had big floods and wind storms, and other things. They're at our disposal, whether it's here in Wisconsin, or recently, with wild storms we've had elsewhere around the country. And at the same time, they're often called, as many have been, to places around the world, when our--- our nation's military needs them, and what has impressed me as I've traveled is how many commanding officers I've talked to from many places around the world who tell me, "National Guard, Reserve, Active duty, I can't tell the difference. I know only by virtue of where they come from but once they're here, they are just as integral to our operations as anyone else." And that, as much as anything, makes me proud.

Schultz: You know there's been a long standing debate about how large our active military should be. And so if we can't quite afford or fund resource properly in active formation, then we're talking about tapping the Guard and Reserve in more ways and larger numbers than, perhaps--- we have in the past. Ever since the 9/11 attacks, that's probably the real difference... That's sixteen plus years.

Walker: Right.

Schultz: And it is an interesting difference because the--- you know, back twenty-five years or so ago, the... the guard was important, but it had nowhere near the responsibilities.

Walker: Right.

Schultz: And it's not just that the military's changed, it's out of necessity. As you mentioned, when you've... when we've had combat around the world for that long, it is a necessary responsibility, in the members of the guard and... and certainly to a similar extent, our reserve, from here and across the nation, and I think... you know, in a way, I think that's good, because when you think about, not just about our founding principles and...and...and those who were involved in the vision that they had, but you still have a very small percentage of Americans that are touched by the Military, and it's increasingly difficult, again the standards are very high. These are exceptional men and women, as they had been in the past, but even more so today, than ever before, but I think when you...you look at active duty through the years of BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure] and other things there are smaller numbers of active duty sites around our nation, and so it's really, I think important, if we're going to continue to make commitments to send our sons and daughters into harm's way, we need to have people from across the country who have an understanding and appreciation. If it was just active duty, there'd be pockets you know, there'd...there'd be places here and there, but here in Wisconsin, there is no active duty base.

Walker: You're right, right.

Instead though, you've got members of the guard from all over the state Wisconsin, from big towns and small cities, and everywhere in-between and I think that's important. Because if the nation is going to support the actions of a president and of a congress, say to declare a war or to take military action, they need to have a sense of understanding that in every part of the nation, not just in a pocket here or a pocket there.

Schultz: Sure. So making a decision to go to Texas or Louisiana or Florida or Puerto Rico, what's that like in terms of the review? Is... Ultimately, you'd be the decision maker?

Walker: Absolutely. And for us, we've got an extraordinary adjutant general, Major General Don Dunbar, who I'm just so pleased to... to have appointed... or reappointed and continued to work with. Our folks, one, as you can tell, I'm proud of our men and women in... in the Wisconsin National Guard, they're exceptional. They're the best of the best, and so, we appreciate what they do in state but as we saw, earlier this past year, when they needed us in Texas, when they needed us in Florida, when they needed us in the Virgin Islands and elsewhere, you know I... typically, what I do is I reach out to the governors of those states who are friends as we did years ago in the Northeast with [Hurricane] Sandy and other places and say, "What...what can we do?"

Schultz: So that's a call you make to them?

Walker: I contact them---

Schultz: Yeah, yeah.

Walker: ---and I say, "What do you need?," what's the... and then... well, what we try to do then is, I make that initial contact, then I ask our... adjutant general to reach out to his counterpart, because we don't want to just send people down there for the sake of it.

Schultz: Sure, sure.

Walker: We want to make sure that the talent we have matches with the needs that they have. So for example, when Texas came, we thought we'd have a much bigger call-up, we didn't. We ended up shifting over to Florida, and eventually, had folks in places like the Virgin Islands, and we tried to match, so we weren't just throwing people down there, but making sure the talent we had matched with the needs that were in place there, and we're more than willing to help. I think the people in our state, even when they said, originally, you know, we might have to cover the cost ourselves for a while, and still the federal government followed up with it. I said, "That's fine with me. We've got enough cash balance, we can make that work and it's important to help our fellow citizens."

Schultz: And now is federal support assured when you make that decision, initially?

Walker: Yes.

Schultz: Okay, so you're...you're confident that...

Walker: Yeah. What we do is, it's... it's... it's anywhere around the country, it's still the call of the governor. Ultimately, if... if a unit gets called up around the world, that's... that's through the commander in chief in the president.

Schultz: So I know you're active with the Council of Governors. So, talk about that relationship, in terms of your role to provide both the local, state, and the federal force, during times of national emergency. What's your sense of how that's working, because you need a relationship with the chairman of Joint Chiefs---

Walker: Right.

Schultz: ---or with the Secretary of Defense?

Walker: Right, and the nice thing is over the years, through the... adding not just having a... head of the bureau of the national guard, but actually adding a spot on the joint chiefs, really been important, because that's something the Council of... of Governors, and the National Governors Association collectively worked very hard on, and working with our... our... our friends in the, not only in the Department of Defense, but in the federal government overall, and making the case over the years, that, you know, particularly a few years ago with sequester, when they were looking at significant reductions in the Department of Defense budget, making sure that that didn't all come out of... of the Guard. Not just for our parochial interests, but because of some things I mentioned before that we really think, fundamentally, it's important to have a representation all across the nation, and you don't get that unless you got a strong guard and a strong reserve to augment active duty. And... and the council really played an integral role in making sure cause originally there were big cuts in the guard---

Schultz: Right, right.

Walker: ---that weren't in balance with where active duty forces were at. Because of our role or involvement in that, we said, "No it's got to be balanced." Not just because we wanted to protect our own guards, but because we thought it was part of the larger national debate.

Schultz: Yeah, tens of... of thousands of spaces are in reduction, actually. So... so before... before the DoD [Department of Defense] can remove a unit from your state, it takes your concurrence?

Walker: That's exactly right. We got to work with... and we got involved and not just as governors for our own units, but... but collectively, we went through the Council and the National Governors Association, and... and said, "We really need to be

partners with this." Particularly when it was both through the Army and through the Air Force. That's something that we got to work together with. And... and to their credit, largely, not 100%, but largely the concerns that we had as governors, were addressed.

Schultz: So you're... your interest, I'm meaning a collective governors set of interests are... are being at least welcomed?

Walker: Absolutely. It started the previous administration, and it's continued under the current administration, and... and its one where even simple things as far as things as even staffing, we've reached out. And this is where, you know, people in America sometimes complain about partisanship, about how the dysfunction of Washington is often attributed to partisanship, in terms of the Council of Governors, on issues related to the Guard, and... and our presence, and our... our... our troop strength, this is bipartisan. All fifty governors have been engaged on that, we united on that, that's something we all shared, really is it, and it shouldn't be, in general, when it comes to the military---

Schultz: Right, right.

Walker: ---but particularly with the National Guard, there is not a gap between the most liberal and most conservative governors. We share this interest and I think that's part of the reason why the federal government, particularly the Department of Defense, reacted to our concerns.

Schultz: So... so you're signing up with the Emergency Management Assistan[ce] Compact [EMAC]. That's an agreement between states and territories basically?

Walker: Yeah and that's really important too. So we've had in... in our state, you know, with cyber security growing, and other challenges out there, I actually have my Adjutant General, whose also dual enrolled as my national security advisor and deals with homeland security issues, and the homeland security council, the guard is an integral part of that. In fact, we just had a school district this week that had a cyber-attack. We sent two folks out from the National Guard to help work with them on that. That's been a part of our homeland security plan. We have daily about 2 million attempts, just against state government. So when people think of the size and magnitude, they talk a lot about, you know, the last year about... we heard about Russia and others. In our state, even with elections, our team actually were the ones who found that before---

Schultz: Is that right?

Walker: ---before we heard it from the federals.

Schultz: Wow. So in terms of the, kind of the cyber set of interests, the vulnerabilities and risks---what can we do to simply improve the communication between the private sector, public sector, your responsibility?

Walker: I think it's really key, and what we did with our... with our homeland security advisor, who's our General Dunbar, we started now, this was our fifth year doing a cyber-summit. We have ongoing things beyond just the summit itself, where we interact between federal, state, and local governments but also the private sector. 'Cause, interestingly enough, particularly for some of our larger corporations that are here in Wisconsin as that we deal with across the country, they're as advanced or more so when it comes to cyber-security just because protecting their assets.

Schultz: Sure.

Walker: It takes that nature, but it takes constant... vigilance for sure, but even communications. Just having an understanding of, "Hey, we found this, it was a problem here. We're addressing it this way." That communication is really helpful along the way and again, like I said, people are surprised. We have more than two million, err... about two million hits a day of attempts to try and break into just to the state government itself.

Schultz: So, Governor, back in the Civil War, Wisconsin furnished ninety plus thousand soldiers to that cause, as they... as they--- left this state a special history in this place, as you know.

Walker: Yeah.

Schultz: That tradition continues, today, and... and so, what is it about the... the citizens, the Wisconsinites, that... that... that makes this unusual?

Walker: Yeah, when I go to our deployments, I give the commanding officer for each of our units a Wisconsin flag folded, and I asked him to take it with him and then bring it back, and the reason for it ties into the history you've just mentioned. Our state was founded in 1848, but the flag itself, a blue flag with the seal of Wisconsin on it, didn't come about until 1863. That was in the midst of the Civil War, when over 91,000 service members from Wisconsin, soldiers, went to the fore... went to the front of the battle, far removed from the State of Wisconsin, and fought, 12,000 of whom paid the ultimate price---

Schultz: [14:41, Indecipherable.]

Walker: ---and I say that that was a part of our proud tradition. They ask for a flag to go along with the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory, to remind them of their family and

friends back at home. So they... My predecessors, back then, the leaders of the State Government, sent that flag to the forefront. The reason I give that flag to those service members deploying is I remind them that not only are they part of an incredibly proud tradition, the United States military, but they're from Wisconsin---

Schultz: Yeah.

---and that when they go back to that, 91,000 at that time, would have been one out of every nine man, woman, and child in the state. So I said, "Count off, one through nine. One out of every nine of you, including, not just men, men, women, and children, would have been a soldier off fighting in the Civil War." I said, "That's our proud tradition." And so I've got in my office a replica of that original flag with the battle streamers from each of those battles from the civil war all the way through, and I said, "That's why from there, through World War One, World War Two, Vietnam, Korea, Desert Storm, Desert Shield, and obviously places around the globe today." That's why we've seen plenty of folks, who've been deployed, not once, not twice. One of the guys I saw overseas was seven times.

Schultz: Right.

Walker: And I said, "That's the kind of courage that comes from our ancestors."

Schultz: Well, Governor, I had responsibility for sending thousands of requirements to Madison, Wisconsin, during my tour as the Army National Guard Director. I just want you to know, that in terms of a tradition, it continues.

Walker: Thank you.

Schultz: You have an awesome legacy here. Thanks for leading this team out here. Dunbar, as you well know, Army and Air Guard members, and the families and the employers of the state are making this all real.

Walker: They absolutely are. And that's where we say, we thank our... when that flag goes, we... we thank, we remember, for the service members being deployed, your family, your loved ones, your neighbors, your employers, all the support that's there, could not happen. They... they couldn't be doing... those men and women couldn't do---

Schultz: Right.

Walker: ---the extraordinary job they do if they didn't have that kind of support.



Schultz: Right, with that, I think we need to close. Thanks, Governor.

Walker: Excellent.

Schultz: That's awesome.

Walker: Perfect. Thank You.

Schultz: Thanks for coming.

Walker: Yeah, yeah!