



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 30590, **Version:** 1

---

### **Fiscal Note**

No appropriation required.

### **Title**

Opposing a state legislative proposal to remove the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus and to forbid university employees from working with the Center.

### **Body**

WHEREAS, on June 5, the Wisconsin Legislature's budget-writing committee, with no public warning, approved a measure evicting the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism from its campus offices and forbidding university employees from working with the Center; and

WHEREAS, many journalists, journalism educators and members of the public say the Center's collaboration with the UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communications must be saved because it's an important experiment in a future model for investigative reporting and journalism education. The center has produced high-impact stories while training young journalists; and

WHEREAS, the measure would prohibit the Board of Regents from permitting the Center for Investigative Journalism to occupy any facilities owned or leased by the Board of Regents. In addition, it would prohibit UW employees from doing any work related to the Center for Investigative Journalism as part of their duties as a UW employee; and

WHEREAS, though the measure was placed in the Budget Bill, the Center receives no funding from the University of Wisconsin. Its \$400,000 budget is supported by private foundations, individuals and news organizations. It operates in two small offices in Vilas Communication Hall under a Facilities Use Agreement that requires the Center to provide paid internships, classroom collaborations, guest lectures and other educational services; and

WHEREAS, the Center is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization based in Madison that collaborates with other media outlets to improve the quality and quantity of investigative journalism in Wisconsin. It focuses on government integrity and quality of life issues; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Finance Committee recently relied on an investigation by the Center into the reliability of GPS tracking of offenders to curtail the governor's requested expansion of GPS tracking until reliability can be proven; and

WHEREAS, the Center's work is published by more than 230 news outlets across Wisconsin and the nation. As of May 2013, a total of 107 major reports and nearly 100 columns had reached more than 25 million people. The Center won eight Milwaukee Press Club awards for its work in 2012; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting the UW-Madison from deciding how to use its offices and employees is a direct assault on academic freedom, and a measure even conservative radio host Charlie Sykes called "a vindictive attack on a journalistic operation on ideological grounds";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Madison Common Council urgently requests that state legislators or the governor remove this provision from the state's 2013-15 budget.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be sent to the state Senate and Assembly and to Governor Scott Walker.