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Those in Charge Must Take Responsibility for Problems at State Veterans Home

Recent reports on the Walker administration's shameful mismanagement of the Wisconsin Home for Veterans at King come as no surprise to staff who have struggled to provide the best care possible for King residents despite years of short-staffing and Madison-knows-best management.

"Our members have for years been raising the alarm about the consequences of the radical changes that took place after Scott Walker became governor," said Rick Badger, executive director of AFSCME Council 32, which represents front-line workers at the home.

Badger said that Act 10 touched off a massive wave of retirements by experienced caregivers, sending the home into a vicious cycle of forced overtime, which placed crushing stress on remaining caregivers while making it hard to hire new staff.

"Jobs at King used to be sought after. There were waiting lists of people eager to work there. Now it is difficult to attract employees because the conditions have become so difficult while employee compensation has gone backwards because of Act 10," he said.

"The front-line workers who have hung in have done so because of their devotion to the people they serve and their belief that our veterans deserve nothing but the best. Sadly their commitment is not shared by those at the top," Badger said.

Badger retired from the Army Reserve in 2007 after tours of duty that included the Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"As a veteran and a union brother of the caregivers at King, I am appalled at the way politicians in Madison have put their own selfish interests ahead of the interests of our veterans living at King. Our veterans deserve better," Badger said.

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