

On October 13, 2014 the Wisconsin Department of Corrections announced a new tax on the family and friends of the states prisoners, as well as the prisoners themselves. The "Canteen Hobby Catalog" program.

Because the program is designated as "canteen" the policy mandates that items being sold "will be marked up approximately 10% over cost before any required sales tax is collected" (see DAI policy #309.52.01, highlighted). This mark up is collected by the contracted vendor and turned over to the state (i.e. a tax).

Prior to this hobby items authorized by the Division of Adult Institutions could be purchased on the free market from any business whos products and business practices met the states guidelines. Now the state is restricting the very free market policies that Governor Scott Walker so enthusiastically endorses, and now restricts purchases to only two businesses. A move likely to effect the quality of products being offered, the diversity of brands being offered, and the broad range of prices that this diversity brought.

New tax levies and anti-free market mandates are two things that Governor Walker has repeatedly said that he will not back, yet weeks before the November election his administration enacts these very same policies.

This latest tax is a continuing trend by the state of Wisconsin of shifting more of the cost of running its prison system onto prisoners and their family and friends. With Charlie Rose reporting that 80% of prisoners come from poverty, this is a tax on the poor.

dominic Marak
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