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Governor showing selective memory with Foxconn comments: Had no problem canceling contract with international train maker Talgo

Speaking yesterday (Monday, April 30) at the Pfister Hotel during the Midwest Conservative Summit, Governor Scott Walker made comments that ignore one of the most bizarre and damaging episodes of his tenure.

Walker noted that Foxconn officials had expressed concerns about Democratic gubernatorial candidates who have said they would “reevaluate” and look to roll back the Foxconn deal if elected.

In response to a question yesterday from an audience member, Governor Walker said: “They (Democratic candidates) are telling you as voters that they’re going to kill it (Foxconn contract). Think about the broader implications of that. What other company is going to come here?”

Rewind to about 10 years ago, when in 2009 the state inked a contract with an international train manufacturer – Talgo – to begin manufacturing operations in a facility at Century City on Milwaukee’s north side. The company, which received no state subsidies, would build two train sets for the Amtrak Hiawatha Milwaukee-to-Chicago line and it was thought the company would be well-positioned for additional train sets for a high-speed rail line connecting Minneapolis, Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago (the federal government had awarded Wisconsin \$810 million to help build the high speed track).

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Governor's comments/ADD ONE

Alderman Robert J. Bauman, chair of the Public Works Committee, said Governor Walker seems to either not remember or is lying about what happened shortly after he was first elected in 2010. “When the Governor talks about Foxconn facing possible reevaluation by a Democratic governor he doesn’t mention that he said ‘no thanks’ to the \$810 million and the state then canceled the contract with Talgo, causing the company to abruptly shutter the facility at Century City,” he said.

“The company then sued the state and was awarded \$50 million in taxpayer money for the two train sets and Talgo was awarded the train sets, so the people of Wisconsin received nothing and paid \$50 million for trains that they will never use,” Alderman Bauman said.

“It is interesting to me that the Governor treats this international manufacturer (Foxconn) locating in Racine County so differently than the one that was about to have success in Milwaukee almost 10 years ago. Although Talgo received no state subsidies and Foxconn is set to receive up to \$4.5 billion in public assistance – it is mind boggling,” he said.

Alderman Bauman said despite the state canceling the Talgo deal almost 10 years ago, the city and region continue to attract commerce and development. “The world didn’t end and businesses continue to want to come here, despite the actions of the Governor and his friends in the Legislature,” he said.

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