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## **Public employees are not the cause of the economic crisis**

**So nurses, snow plow operators and school lunch ladies are now enemies of the state while we write off the real culprits who created the Great Recession: Wall Street and the bonus culture of the banking and finance industries? Our priorities are certainly wrong when we vilify the victims and excuse the perpetrators.**

It's time for a reality check. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is stretching credibility when he says he respects his state's public service workers while seeking to eradicate their right to collective bargaining, now and forever. He says he's not a union buster but his actions speak volumes more than his words. The fact that he's not interested in any compromise should tell you a lot about his extremism.

Collective bargaining provides workers a chance to have a voice in the workplace. It means both labor and management go to the bargaining table in good faith to find common ground. Debate and compromise is fundamental to problem solving and generating creative solutions to everyday and long-term challenges. Collective bargaining is never perfect but the alternative is ugly — management running roughshod and political cronyism. No one should expect that eliminating collective bargaining will provide better management or better government.

**Working people in Wisconsin didn't cause the fiscal mess there any more than workers here in New York are responsible for our state's fiscal circumstances.**

Attacking your DMV clerk, bad-mouthing the emergency room technician and taking away the rights of your librarian won't solve anything, but it will undermine the services you depend on and hurt a lot of people. It may be convenient to scapegoat public service workers but it's wrong and undermines our society.

**Civil Service Employees Association members are those nurses, mental health workers, park attendants you know and trust. We've been around for more than 100 years now — we didn't survive for a century by being selfish and impractical.**

Contrary to popular belief, CSEA members earn about \$40,000 a year; most contribute to their health insurance costs; most also contribute toward their pensions, which are an average of \$14,000 a year. CSEA members are dedicated to a better New York for all.

Off the job, CSEA members live and contribute in every community in this state — coaching the Little League teams, supporting every conceivable charity and volunteering our time.

These are facts and they should make all of us pause when we see this continued assault on our family, friends and neighbors.

**The writer is president of the Civil Service Employees Association of New York.**