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August 26, 2015

In the second week of July 2015 the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly voted in favor of the proposed 2015-2017 budget bill, including a provision to remove tenure and shared governance from state statute. Governor Scott Walker signed the budget into law on July 11, 2015. The signed budget also includes a new provision, adopted from the Joint Finance Committee's Omnibus Motion #521 (p. 7, section 39), that makes the precarious nature of tenure clear: "...the Board may layoff or terminate a tenured faculty member, or layoff or terminate a probationary faculty member prior to the end of his or her appointment when such an action is deemed necessary due to a budget or program decision regarding program discontinuance, curtailment, modification, or redirection, instead of when a financial emergency exists as under current law." These provisions apply to all the universities in the University of Wisconsin System.

Tenure is the most important safeguard of academic freedom, and academic freedom is a bedrock principle of philosophical inquiry. The Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association deplores the assault on academic freedom in Wisconsin, whether it affects the flagship University of Wisconsin-Madison or the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee or any other universities in the UW System, and we deplore the precedent it sets. We call on legislators, regents and other campus administrators to work towards restoring recognized standards of tenure in Wisconsin.

The board also endorses the [statement defending tenure and academic freedom in Wisconsin](#), dated June 11, 2015, which was drafted by the American Historical Association and signed or endorsed by 32 scholarly associations. The board further endorses the [statement by the board of directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities](#) on principles of academic freedom and tenure, dated June 22, 2015.

Signed,



Cheshire Calhoun, chair  
for the Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association