

Episode 57DEC February 15 2025 Wisconsin Research cuts threatened Germans critique Vance

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1 Wisconsin Madison Leaders at the University of Wisconsin Madison warn a proposed cut to federal funding could significantly affect the university research budget The provost at the University of Wisconsin Madison urged faculty staff and students to be cautious and continue their work amid uncertainty in federal research funding UW Madison grad students are very afraid of federal funding turmoil [Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization](#) The Capital Times February 11 2025 Leaders at the University of Wisconsin Madison warn a proposed cut to federal funding could significantly affect the university research budget Graduate students at the University of Wisconsin Madison are feeling scared frustrated and confused about the uncertainty of federal research funding A federal judge last month blocked efforts by Trump to halt the flow of billions of federal dollars Then on February 7 the National Institutes of Health announced a dramatic cut in funding for some research expenses at UW Madison and other institutions Wisconsin joined 21 other states in filing a lawsuit challenging the Trump research cuts The reduction was set to go into effect February 10 but a federal judge temporarily blocked that move as well To gut funding to help find cures and treatments for things like cancer Alzheimers disease and diabetes is unconscionable said Democratic Governor Tony Evers UW Madison could lose roughly \$65 million this year through the cuts according to the lawsuit National Institutes of Health funding is the largest source of federal support at UW Madison The university was awarded nearly \$500 million through grants in recent years The National Institutes of Health provides research funding that supports expenses such as staff salaries graduate student stipends and supplies UW Madison said The agency also funds indirect costs including scientific equipment laboratory construction utilities and other items The negotiated rates at UW Madison range from 26% to 55.5% the university said Trump is seeking to reduce recovery rates to 15% for new and existing grants That decrease would inevitably affect opportunities for students to work on research and delay the discovery of life saving treatments and cures All of us work together to make new discoveries Hundreds of projects on campus are funded by the National Institutes of Health The UW School of Medicine and Public Health recently received a historic \$150 million award from NIH to research Alzheimers disease the former NIH director visited UW Madison last summer to highlight

the UW Madison biomedical research including work to develop targeted cancer treatments UW Madison spends an average of \$188 million every week on federally funded research At a meeting of faculty and assembly staff leaders Monday afternoon they were asked if there are expenditures that you can hold off for a few weeks in any particular place please at least consider it Broader effect across Wisconsin In addition to UW Madison the National Institutes of Health cuts could affect other research institutions in Wisconsin including the Medical College of Wisconsin president and CEO echoed worries Monday about the immediate and long term effects on biomedical research Even brief disruptions can halt clinical trials prevent patient recruitment and delay the publication of critical findings affecting the number of patients who could benefit from new treatments The college remains committed to this important work as school leaders seek clarity from the federal government he said The Wisconsin Technology Council urged Wisconsin members of Congress to restore NIH indirect cost rates and encourage the National Science Foundation and other agencies not to make similar changes It is not just about Madison Every campus in the Universities of Wisconsin receives some federal research and development dollars as do major private institutions the council said in a statement

2 Canada British Columbia Williams Lake Economy I am very fearful Power plant key to Williams Lake economy on the verge of shutdown **RAWSEP View** Just stop wood burning No community should have to rely on burning wood for energy We need to phase it out and replace it with clean combustion free energy **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization** Global News February 14 2025 Williams Lake in danger of losing biomass plant Williams Lake in danger of losing biomass plant The City of Williams Lake is calling on the provincial government and BC Hydro to take action and prevent the closure of one of its most important businesses The City of Williams Lake BC is calling on the province to step in to prevent the closure of a power plant critical to local employment and the municipality bottom line The Atlantic Power facility generates enough electricity to power about 50000 homes by burning wood waste It is responsible for about 40 full time jobs and pays about \$17 million in direct taxes to the city every year BC Hydro imports record amount of electricity BC Hydro imports record amount of electricity I might have to shut down half of city hall Williams Lake Mayor Surinderpal Rathor said of the looming closure This is the single biggest taxpayer to the community The Atlantic Power plant gave notice last February that it was going to pull out of the community citing an inability to remain profitable under its current contract with BC Hydro Williams Lake City Councillor Scott Nelson said that is because with the closure of local sawmills and upgrades to others to improve their efficiency **easy to access wood fibre has become more scarce Instead the company now sources inputs from the surrounding Chilcotin Plateau collecting the waste wood left by wildfires and dead wood that could become fuel for future wildfires he said** As you go further out you reduce the fires but it also costs more to bring this into Atlantic Power he said Nelson said it makes no sense to shutter a plant that is producing local electricity when **the province is already importing power from the US thanks to recent droughts** and while the US is threatening

massive tariffs on Canada Rathor said the company is weeks away from issuing layoff notices to workers something he said could devastate the community The city is calling on Premier David Eby to step in and ensure BC Hydro negotiates a new contract something Rathor says the province promised The Energy Ministry said it recognizes the importance of the plant and the premier had created a cross government team to work with Atlantic on solutions Those include providing the company with additional fuel supply options It said BC Hydro had also amended its electricity purchase agreement with the company in October to give the working group more time to come up with long term solutions to the affordable fibre supply problem In the meantime city officials remain on edge at the prospect of losing a key component of their local economy Atlantic Power is getting close to saying that is it we are gone Nelson said I am very fearful Other stories New study warns of more severe fire risk in Canada without preventive measures Trump announces sweeping global reciprocal tariffs Canadian man sells both Teslas cancels Cybertruck order to boycott Musk

3 Australia Melbourne A Heated Debate Are Australian Woodfire Heaters Polluting Australian Human Rights Obligations? Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization Monash University February 13 2025 It is easy to romanticise the soft glow of woodfire heaters with warm feelings Yet the associated smoke is of serious concern Alarmingly a recent study in Australia estimates that in a single year 728 deaths were attributable to fine particulate matter from woodfire heaters It is also the largest source of pollution in Australia in many areas This post examines whether Australia is fulfilling its obligations under Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights ICESCR as well as additional agreements that underscore the necessity to mitigate air pollution to safeguard health Breathing in Danger Woodfire heaters contain a cocktail of carcinogenic chemicals including particulate matter PM2.5 carbon monoxide carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides Not only does woodfire usage contribute to 60% of fine particle pollution there is correlation between ingestion of said substances and decreased lung capacity increased risks of heart attacks and oesophageal cancer Simultaneously the combustion of wood releases black carbon a potent climate pollutant fuelling climate change it is evident that pollutant smoke is incongruous to health from both a biological and environmental perspective The right to life and right to health are also interconnected with environmental international frameworks such as the United Nation Human Rights Council resolutions and the Paris Agreement requiring Australia to address pollution and climate change to protect human life and wellbeing Against this backdrop Australian domestic air quality standards are more lenient than the World Health Organization WHO guidelines The Australian National Environment Protection Measure mandates maximum annual PM2.5 particulate levels of 8 micrograms per cubic meter in contrast to the WHO which recommends a maximum of 5 micrograms per cubic meter The misalignment also arguably constitutes a breach of Article 12 obligation to ensure healthy environmental conditions Moving Forward Promisingly the Australian Capital Territory recently announced it would phase out woodfire heaters by 2045 in recognition of the harmful health and environmental impacts of woodfire emissions While a step in the right

direction and a precedent for other Australian jurisdictions to follow the 21 year window enables the inevitability of continued fatalities and illness to fester To recognise that it must proactively take steps within available resources to realise the right to health Australia must immediately adopt a unified and proactive regulatory framework that prioritises health and human rights with respect to air quality This should begin with air quality standards in line with WHO recommendations creating a consistent national baseline Additionally the Federal government should earmark subsidies or similar fiscal incentives to citizens so to encourage the transition from woodfire heaters to green heating technologies This measure should prioritise the vulnerable populations in rural and low income areas and therefore mitigate the inequalities they currently are subjected to By adopting these proposals Australia can better fulfil its international obligations under the ICESCR and ICCPR and demonstrate global leadership in addressing health human rights and environmental sustainability with respect to the dangers of wood fire heaters

4 Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany on Saturday accused Vice President JD Vance of unacceptably interfering in the German imminent elections on behalf of a party that has played down the atrocities committed by the Nazis 80 years ago **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization** The New York Times February 15 2025 A day after Vance stunned the Munich Security Conference by telling German leaders to drop their so called firewall and allow the hard right Alternative for Germany or AfD to enter their federal government Olaf Scholz accused Vance of effectively violating a commitment to never again allow Germany to be led by fascists who could repeat the horrors of the Holocaust A commitment to never again is not reconcilable with support for the AfD Scholz said at the conference on Saturday morning in an address opening the second day of the gathering Scholz said the AfD had trivialized Nazi atrocities like the concentration camp at Dachau which Vance visited on Friday The chancellor said Germany would not accept suggestions from outsiders about how to run its democracy or directives to work with such a party as AfD That is not done certainly not among friends and allies Scholz said Where our democracy goes from here is for us to decide Attendees at the speech Vance made had been expecting to hear details of the Trump plans for Ukraine peace talks and NATO defense policies On Saturday President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine himself put the focus on the Ukraine war in his remarks starkly laying out the threat from Russian battle hardened military and making an impassioned appeal for Europeans to take their security into their own hands including by forming an Army of Europe that would supplement US power on the continent His speech drew standing ovations in contrast to the Vance speech the day before The Scholz comments underscored a growing unease among European leaders about their relationship with the United States and their own domestic politics They came as leaders scrambled at the summit to formulate a response to the Trump sudden shift in Ukraine policy and the possibility that he could cut the continent out of negotiations Just a few days before the Vance remarks Trump threatened to impose new tariffs on virtually every country the United States trades with Then he spoke of negotiating an end to Russian war in Ukraine directly with Putin of

Russia leaving Europeans including Ukraine wondering if they would be included The foreign minister of Poland said at the summit that President Emmanuel Macron of France had called an emergency meeting of European leaders to discuss Ukraine on Sunday At the same time far right parties across Europe have gained ground by tapping into unease which also helped propel Trump back to power in the United States The Vance comments suggested that a new kind of American alliance with Europe was forming that bypasses the official leadership in favor of movements like the German AfD and the National Rally in France At the Saturday sessions of the security conference reactions were predominantly negative to the Vance speech and the Trump agenda Scholz was joined in his criticism by Friedrich Merz his rival as the chancellor who the conservative Christian Democrats candidate who polls suggest is the favorite to be the next leader of Germany Vance spent much of his speech on Friday scolding Europeans for what he suggested were Soviet style restrictions on free speech across the continent On Saturday Friedrich Merz defended the German laws that prohibit particular forms of speech including hate speech and banned Nazi slogans including on social media Merz also criticized the Trump tariff policy saying that Germany wanted to reduce tariffs not increase them and that we do not believe in trade conflicts The comments were the latest in a series of critiques of the Vance speech from German politicians before the snap election next Sunday the Scholz Social Democrats are running third or fourth in most polls The AfD is running second and its chancellor candidate Alice Weidel met Vance on Friday in Munich Alternative for Germany AfD candidates have been able to win parliamentary seats but no other party has been willing to form a coalition with them to take control of the government Parts of the AfD have been classified as extremist by German intelligence Some of its members have been convicted of violating German law against the use of Nazi slogans Others have been arrested for trying to overthrow the federal government That collective shunning of the AfD and other extremist parties is known as the firewall Vance said the AfD and other hard right parties across Europe represented legitimate voter concerns There is no room for firewalls Vance said Scholz chided Vance for that focus in a question and answer session after his speech He was asked by the editor in chief of The Economist if Vance had made any points in his speech worth reflecting on You mean all these very relevant discussions about Ukraine and security in Europe? Scholz said drawing laughter from the audience Then Scholz said We should be very clear that free speech in Europe means that you are not attacking others in ways that are against legislation and laws we have in our country And that is the case There is no difference between the digital world and the analog world to say it like this Zelensky in his remarks focused on the question of European defense The United States would be pivotal in securing any cease fire in Ukraine Europe also has to also step up There were intelligence warnings of Russian plans to conduct military exercises in Belarus next summer Russia invaded Ukraine after deploying troops to Belarus under the guise of exercises Europe just needs to start acting in a way that no one can say No to Europe boss it around or treat it like a pushover Zelensky said In a conversation after his speech Zelensky also said that Ukraine needed to be at the table at any cease fire talks and he asked to meet with Trump before any meeting that Trump has with Putin of Russia It is up to them they can discuss anything they want but not Ukraine without Ukraine Zelensky said