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Get Big Money



Out of Politics!

March 2003

Breaks to big donors survive budget crisis so far, 'graft tax' grows to over \$1,300 per taxpayer

All but a tiny fraction of the billions of dollars worth of breaks and policy favors that go to big campaign donors are untouched in the proposed state budget bill that aims to close a deficit of more than \$3 billion.

In January, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign study entitled "*The Graft Tax*" identified \$4.6 billion worth of tax breaks, pork barrel spending projects, lucrative state contracts and other favors. New estimates of the value of the breaks now put the price tag at \$5 billion a year – or \$1,305 per taxpayer.

Of the dozens of items cited in the report, only \$1 million in ethanol production subsidies are slated to be cut in the budget bill.

**They get the pork,
you get the barrel.**



The state budget promises you higher property taxes and fewer government services. The biggest campaign donors get breaks that will cost individual taxpayers like you over \$1,300 per year!

Fight Back!

Find out how at www.wisd.org

Or call the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign toll-free at 888-455-4260

Governor's race cost \$23 million

Fueled by the cost of tens of thousands of negative and misleading TV ads, spending in the 2002 campaign for governor approached \$23 million – nearly triple the previous record set in the last election.

The candidates spent \$18.8 million during the four-year campaign cycle, including \$16.2 million in 2002 alone – an average of \$44,420 a day.

In addition to the candidate spending, special interest groups spent an estimated \$3.9 million on their own campaigns to influence the outcome of the race. This included just under \$1 million in disclosed independent expenditures and roughly three times as much, \$2.9 million, on unreported issue ads –

Spending on the 2002 race nearly tripled the \$8.1 million spent on the last campaign for governor in 1998.

bringing the total price tag for the race to \$22.7 million.

The previous record for campaign spending in a governor's race was \$8.1 million, set in the last gubernatorial election in 1998.

Former Republican Governor Scott McCallum lost despite spending over \$7.7 million on his bid. Governor Jim Doyle spent \$5.9 million, while unsuccessful Democratic candidates Tom Barrett and Kathleen Falk spent \$2.8 million and \$1.4 million respectively. Libertarian Ed Thompson was the next biggest spender at \$511,591.

While he was outspent by McCallum, Doyle got a major boost in the final weeks of the campaign when three Native American tribes and several corporations – including road builder Mathy Construction, Miller Brewing, two major state utilities and a top public relations firm – pumped nearly \$1 million in unrestricted soft money donations into the race on Doyle's behalf. In addition, one of the tribes ran roughly \$250,000 worth of its own ads touting Doyle in the late stages of the campaign.

Top spenders win over 9 of every 10 legislative races

Legislative candidates who spent the most money in 2002 won 91% of the races up for grabs last November.

The leading spenders, most of whom were officeholders running for reelection with large war chests amassed with special interest contributions, won 106 of 116 races for legislative seats.

In the Senate, 16 of 17 seats were won by the biggest spenders in each contest. In 14 of those races the winners were incumbents or officeholders from the Assembly who used the advantages of incumbency to move up to the Senate. In the Assembly, 90 of 99 seats were captured by the biggest spenders in those races.

Legislative candidates spent a record \$7.54 million in 2002, and special interest spent another \$1.94 million on their own campaigns to influence the outcome of legislative races.

Spending by legislative candidates in 2002 was 34% higher than the \$5.64 million spent in 1998 when there also was a race for governor and other statewide offices. The increase in spending is more than triple the 10% inflation rate during the four-year period.

The full report on legislative spending – including a candidate-by-candidate breakdown – is available on WDC's web site at www.wisdc.org.





Doris "Granny D" Haddock and WDC director Mike McCabe shared the stage at a University of Wisconsin-Whitewater forum on campaign finance reform in February.

Reform pilgrim 'Granny D' brings inspiring message to Wisconsin

Whether the subject is war, women's rights or – as is most often the case – the health of American democracy and the need for campaign finance reform, Doris Haddock is never at a loss for words.

But the five-foot-tall, 93-year-old great grandmother from the little town of Dublin, New Hampshire has done her best talking with her feet.

The woman friends and family call "Granny D" is best known for her 3,200 mile trek across the country to demonstrate her concern for the health of democracy and raise awareness of the need for campaign finance reform.

Despite suffering from emphysema and arthritis, Granny D walked 10 miles a day for 14 months. She wore out four pairs of shoes during her pilgrimage, and was hospitalized once, in Arizona, with dehydration and pneumonia. She climbed the Appalachian range in blizzard conditions, and when snowstorms between Cumberland, Maryland and Washington threatened to delay her planned February 2000 arrival in the nation's capital, she cross country skied the last 100 miles.

During the 2001 congressional debate on the McCain-Feingold reform bill, Granny D walked continuously around the Capitol building for seven days. During the final three days of debate, she walked around the clock in rain and subfreezing winds, stopping only for catnaps and food. She met with 35 senators during this vigil, describing to them the feelings of the people she met along the road.

Granny D recently became a published author and travels across the country speaking about the need for reform. Her journeys recently brought her to Wisconsin, where she gave speeches in Madison and Whitewater. WDC executive director Mike McCabe joined her as a panelist in a February 18 forum on campaign finance reform sponsored by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

For more on Granny D and her amazing life story, check out her web site, GrannyD.com.

Meyer joins WDC staff

Debby Anderson Meyer became the Democracy Campaign's new outreach director in January. She replaces Les Wakefield, who left the WDC to take a staff position in the Legislature.

Debby's past experience includes work as a grants specialist in the Wisconsin Department of Justice, a budget and policy analyst and program manager for the state Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) program, and budget analyst for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

She also is a longtime community activist and parent advocate, and is a former school board candidate.

Welcome to WDC, Debby!

Wanted: A few good volunteers

In this issue of *Big Money Bulletin* is a sign-up sheet for WDC members who are willing and able to volunteer some time to the cause of clean government and revitalized democracy.

There are a lot of different things you can do, and we hope at least one of them can fit your schedule and interests. Thanks in advance!

From the executive director

An unbalanced budget

Elected officials serve the public best when they serve in fear.

And I can tell you this: They don't fear you. Not unless you have a habit of writing very large checks to political campaigns.

If you need convincing, look no further than the state budget bill. The Democracy Campaign has identified \$5 billion worth of tax breaks, pork barrel spending, sweetheart deals on state contracts and other favors that go to the biggest campaign donors.

The proposed state budget cuts \$1 million of the \$5 BILLION in political perks. That's \$1 *million* with an "m." As in "measly."

While special interests stand to lose *two one-hundredths of 1%* of their bounty, the budget is balanced on the backs of people who don't bankroll

campaigns. UW students face a 19% increase in tuition – a hike of as much as \$700 per year. Homeowners will pay higher property taxes and get fewer government services thanks to steep cuts in state aid to local communities.

The corporations get to keep their prized property tax exemptions, so ordinary homeowners take it in the neck again when the state's promise to fund two-thirds of school costs is broken. To the extent property taxpayers balk at paying more, school children will be the losers.

Seniors will pay as much as 70% more for prescription drug assistance under the SeniorCare program. Autistic children and their families face losing a nationally renowned therapy program. And 2,900 state workers stand to lose their jobs.

Understanding the need for campaign finance reform is as simple as understanding who wins and who loses in this budget.

— *Mike McCabe*



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