



Big Money Bulletin

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Get Big Money



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On the Web:
www.wisdc.org

Money doesn't talk at Capitol, it shouts

WDC shows special interest giving mirrors legislative votes

A new Wisconsin Democracy Campaign analysis of roll call votes on eight key legislative proposals finds that legislators who voted with special interests supporting the measures received nearly \$10 million in campaign contributions and those who did not received just over \$2 million from contributors with an interest in the issues.

In one case, legislators who voted with special interests received 48 times more money from those interests than those who voted against the proposal.

The Democracy Campaign reviewed Assembly and Senate votes on bills ranging from "job creation" proposals to plans to expand Milwaukee's school choice program and restrict minimum wage increases.

"You can predict votes on bills with amazing precision just by following the money trail," WDC executive director Mike McCabe said. "The sad conclusion reached when you analyze roll call votes is that money buys legislation in Wisconsin."

WDC's analysis is available online at www.wisdc.org.

Notable quotes....

Campaign fundraising is "the most embarrassing thing I've had to do in my life – calling strangers and begging for money."

— *Congressman Jerry Kleczka, D-Milwaukee,*
on why he decided not to seek reelection

"Can you imagine if the airlines ran ads about each other emphasizing plane crashes? No one would ever fly. Why should we be surprised that people have such a negative attitude toward politics and government?"

— *State Senator Mark Meyer, D-La Crosse,*
on why he too is leaving public office

"I realized Wisconsin politics is more corrupt than I ever believed."

— *State Representative Jeff Wood, R-Chippewa Falls,*
on why he didn't want to be part of the political
process anymore (before deciding to run for one
more term)

"Meaningful campaign finance reform must happen now to expand the slate of qualified candidates who will act according to their convictions, not the dictates and influence of money from special interest groups."

— *Businessman Paul Linzmeyer, who is chair of the*
Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce

WDC exposes indecent TV

A glimpse of Janet Jackson's breast at the Super Bowl prompted a federal investigation, but the Democracy Campaign exposed a far more serious example of indecency in the media earlier this month.

WDC learned that Milwaukee NBC affiliate WTMJ obtained exclusive rights to a February 15 presidential primary debate and refused to allow other NBC affiliates in Green Bay, Madison, Eau Claire and Rhinelander to air it. Those stations instead showed "Shrek" – an animated movie about a green ogre. Wisconsin Public Television tried for several weeks to get rights to broadcast the candidate debate statewide, but was denied.

After WDC blew the whistle and sent out an action alert to our statewide e-mail network, WTMJ and the other NBC stations were flooded with calls and e-mails. WTMJ quickly backtracked. An e-mail statement from station vice president and general manager Mark Strachota said WTMJ's "intent all along was to get this debate to the widest possible audience" and added that "until this e-mail campaign started I had not heard from any of the commercial affiliates...as to their desire to carry the debate."

The debate was hastily offered to the other NBC affiliates. The local stations still showed "Shrek" during the live debate but at least two aired a taped version later that night.

Usage rules that remained posted on WTMJ's web site after the debate contradicted Strachota's e-mailed statement of the station's intent. The rules said "no excerpt may air in any medium until the live debate concludes" and "no more than a combined total of 2 minutes of excerpts may be chosen for use...until 1:30AM ET, Monday, February 16."

Now *that's* obscene.



Velvet Discrimination

Big campaign contributions make keeping people in their place seem almost patriotic

Campaign donations come from an elite sliver of society and pack a discriminatory wallop rivaling poll taxes and literacy tests, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign study entitled "Class War Chests" illustrates.

Over half of campaign contributions to candidates seeking state office come from less than 4% of Wisconsin's more than 900 zip codes. A single zip

The full report is available online at www.wisdc.org/classwar chests.html

code – 53217, which covers Milwaukee's wealthiest suburbs – produced nearly \$1 million more in campaign contributions than the state's 61 poorest zip codes combined and almost four times as much as the 15 zip codes with the highest non-white populations.

Of the \$47.4 million in campaign contributions since 1993 to candidates for the legislature, governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general, over \$10.1 million came from just six zip codes. These zip codes account for 4% of the adult state population and include portions of Madison and its affluent Maple Bluff and Shorewood Hills suburbs as well as sections of Milwaukee and its wealthy "Gold Coast" suburbs such as Bayside, Fox Point, River Hills, Glendale, Mequon and Whitefish Bay.

Even in some zip codes with high poverty rates, WDC's analysis shows the contributions did not come from the people who live there, but rather the affluent professionals who work there. Although contributors are required by law to disclose their home addresses, many list only their employer's address.

"Our findings show why campaign finance reform is one of the most important civil rights issues of our time," WDC executive director Mike McCabe said. "Campaign donations are the smart bombs of the race and class wars. In theory at least, anyone can make them so they do not appear discriminatory. Racial and class discrimination have been made to

State board takes step toward reining in phony 'issue ads'

The state Elections Board voted 5-4 last month to start crafting a rule that would subject so-called "issue ads" run by special interest groups during election campaigns to Wisconsin's disclosure laws and campaign contribution limits.

In December, the U.S. Supreme Court opened the door to regulation of sham issue ads as electioneering communications when it upheld the constitutionality of the federal McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law.

A rule regulating issue ads would close a gaping loophole in Wisconsin's campaign finance system.

Urgent Member Appeal

WDC needs to raise \$15,000 to qualify for \$15,000 matching grant

The Seattle, Washington-based Quixote Foundation has approved a \$15,000 challenge grant for this year to help the Democracy Campaign spread the word about its work to a larger audience throughout the state through paid media campaigns.

So if we can raise \$15,000, the foundation will match it with \$15,000. And we'll be able to pay for newspaper ads like the one below. (Other examples of ad campaigns to make more people aware of our work are on WDC's web site at www.wisdc.org/pr091503.html.)

Please use the enclosed reply card to make a donation. Every dollar you give gets us a dollar closer to qualifying for the \$15,000 matching grant.

Join the **Mousepad Rebellion**

**Wisconsin
Democracy
Campaign**
www.wisdc.org

Fighting for clean government and real democracy. www.wisdc.org

Politically rich get even richer

Campaign fundraising among state office holders in the last half of 2003 was decidedly top-heavy as a few political heavyweights soaked up most of the campaign cash while rank and file lawmakers raised money at a relatively sluggish pace, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign analysis of the latest campaign finance reports shows.

Democratic Governor Jim Doyle raised the most money in the period – \$944,904. Doyle's fundraising surpasses even that of former Republican Governor Tommy Thompson for comparable periods. In the last half of 1999

The top 13 legislative fundraisers took in more than the rest of the 132-member Legislature combined.

Thompson raised \$295,145 and in the last six months of 1995 he raised \$441,681.

Overall, legislators raised just over \$1.3 million in the last half of the year and had cash on hand totaling nearly \$3.2 million entering the 2004 election year.

The top 13 legislative fundraisers took in more – \$668,464 – than the rest of the 132-member Legislature combined.

Legislative leaders also sharply increased fundraising for the partisan campaign committees they control. The four leadership-run committees raised \$296,183 in the last half of 2003, up 115% from two years ago.

Fundraising by Assembly Speaker John Gard is a particularly striking example of how money flows to power. Gard raised \$156,965 in the last six months of 2003 – more than twice as much as any other legislator. This compares to the \$16,387 and \$15,690 he raised in comparable periods in the last six months of 2001 and 1999, when he was not speaker.

On the other side of the coin, indicted Senator Chuck Chvala, perennially one of the Legislature's leading fundraisers when he was Democratic leader, raised a mere \$1,261 in the last half of 2003 now that he no longer holds a leadership position.

More notable quotes....

“We need to get the big money out of politics, and pass campaign finance reform. I am working with Senators Jon Erpenbach and Mike Ellis to do just that. There’s one thing we all should agree on. Groups that run phony issue ads should have the same reporting and contribution requirements as everyone else.”

— *Governor Jim Doyle, in his State of the State Address*

“I am pleased that the governor announced that he places a priority on changing Wisconsin law that allows special interests to run campaign ads disguised as ‘issue ads’ without reporting who paid for the ads.”

— *Senator Judy Robson, D-Beloit, in reaction to Doyle’s speech*

look like an act of good citizenship.”

“I think there will be a campaign finance reform bill passed. It will be a comprehensive bill, and we’ll all be proud of it.”

— *Senator Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, co-chair of the Joint Finance Committee*

“After getting the state back on track, I look forward to working with the Governor to tackle the critical issues of job creation, health care, education and campaign finance reform. All of our true successes of the past year came when bipartisan cooperation replaced partisan political gimmicks. The Governor’s vision for controlling health care costs, strengthening educational opportunities, and getting big money out of politics are issues that Democrats and Republicans can find common ground for the good of Wisconsin’s working families.”

— *Senator Jon Erpenbach, D-Middleton, Senate Democratic Leader*



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