



# Big Money Bulletin

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Out of Politics!

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On the Web:  
[www.wisdcm.org](http://www.wisdcm.org)

## Elections Board gets cold feet on disclosure rule

The state Elections Board was poised to adopt a truth-in-campaigning rule written by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign at its May meeting until two Democratic appointees switched sides and refused to vote for final approval.

The proposed rule requires full disclosure of special interest campaign ads and the unlimited and anonymous “soft money” donations that pay for them. WDC research shows that at least \$4 million in corporate contributions and other soft money donations escaped detection by the state’s campaign finance disclosure system in 2002.

State Democratic Party chair Linda Honold and party executive director Kim Warkentin defended the flip flop by party appointees Carl Holborn and Martha Love. One excuse Honold and Warkentin offered is that adopting a rule a few months before the 2004 election would change the rules in the middle of the game. This is a red herring because the rule’s chief backers offered to explicitly spell out that the effective date would be after the 2004 elections but neither Holborn nor Love – both of whom had previously voted three times on procedural motions to move forward with the rulemaking – took them up on their offer.

Honold and Warkentin also said there are serious constitutional concerns about the proposed rule – another smokescreen in light of the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court gave its blessing last December to the approach embodied in the proposed state rule. The Wisconsin Supreme Court also invited the Elections Board to adopt such a rule in a 1999 ruling. And on more than one occasion, the Legislature’s own attorneys have said the Elections Board has the authority to regulate special interest campaign ads and that such regulation is clearly constitutional in light of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision upholding the federal McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law.

“The only thing preventing this reform is a lack of political will. Anyone who is ‘100 percent committed to campaign finance reform’ – as state Democratic Party leaders claim to be – should be outraged by the Elections Board’s inaction,” WDC executive director Mike McCabe said.

The Elections Board put off further action on the proposed disclosure rule until its September 1 meeting.

## Speak Up!

The Elections Board has the power to adopt what would be the biggest accomplishment in the area of campaign finance reform at the state level in over 25 years. **The Board needs to hear from you before September 1. See action alert on page 2 for information about how you can get involved.**

# ACTION ALERT

## Stop Phony Issue Ads & Illegal Soft Money

Contact the Elections Board and urge the Board to adopt the proposed rule requiring full disclosure of soft money and phony issue ads at its meeting on September 1.

### Wisconsin State Elections Board

P.O. Box 2973

Madison, WI 53701-2973

Phone: 608-266-8005

E-mail: [seb@seb.state.wi.us](mailto:seb@seb.state.wi.us)

The two Democratic appointees who flip-flopped on the proposed disclosure rule – Martha Love and Carl Holborn – represent the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and Assembly Democratic Leader James Kreuser, respectively.

Contact Governor Jim Doyle, the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and Assembly Democratic Leader James Kreuser and let them know how disappointed you are in the Democratic Party for backing away from campaign reform when the chips were down.

### Governor Jim Doyle

P.O. Box 7863

Madison, WI 53707

Phone: 266-1212

Contact via Web:

[www.wisgov.state.wi.us/contact.asp](http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/contact.asp)

### Democratic Party of Wisconsin

222 W. Washington Ave., Suite 150

Madison, WI 53703

Phone: 608-255-5172

E-mail: [party@wisdems.org](mailto:party@wisdems.org)

### Representative James Kreuser

P.O. Box 8952

Madison, WI 53708

Phone: 608-266-5504

Toll-free: 888-534-0064

E-mail: [rep.kreuser@legis.state.wi.us](mailto:rep.kreuser@legis.state.wi.us)

## Media reform conference draws top speakers, nearly 200 activists

The first statewide “Our Democracy, Our Airwaves” media reform conference hosted by the Wisconsin Democracy attracted close to 200 people to the free, all-day event May 21.

WDC far surpassed its goal of 125 participants, a testimony to growing citizen concern over media issues but also no doubt due to a lineup of speakers that included John Nichols of *The Capital Times* and *The Nation*, FightingBob.com editor Ed Garvey, Alliance for Better Campaigns director Meredith McGehee and WISC-TV editorial director Neil Heinen.

Following the presentations were excellent discussions and strategic planning sessions focused on how citizens can take action locally to make sure that media organizations in their own backyards serve the public.

Things you can do include:

- **Organize a community forum or neighborhood discussion group** to raise awareness of the need for media reform. Call us at **608-255-4260** for a copy of a 7-minute video featuring Walter Cronkite and a discussion guide.
- **Collect signatures on “Our Democracy, Our Airwaves” petitions.** To download a printable version, go to [ourairwaves.org/docs/index.php?DocID=12](http://ourairwaves.org/docs/index.php?DocID=12). Then mail them to the address on this newsletter or fax them to **608-255-4359**.
- **Join a citizen team that meets with local television station managers** to discuss how they serve the public. Get in touch with us if you’re interested.
- **Get involved in an effort to challenge the licenses of television stations** that fail to serve the public interest. For more information, call WDC or e-mail us at [wisdc@wisdc.org](mailto:wisdc@wisdc.org). Or check out [ourairwaves.org/freeairtime/factsheets/LicenseRenewals.pdf](http://ourairwaves.org/freeairtime/factsheets/LicenseRenewals.pdf) on the Web.



## Disclosure rule fight, media reform conference stretch WDC's resources – donations needed

After the U.S. Supreme Court opened the door to state-level campaign reforms by upholding the federal McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law last December, the Democracy Campaign asked the Elections Board to adopt state rules banning soft money and regulating so-called "issue ads" sponsored by special interest groups.

WDC then wrote the draft rule that is being considered by the Elections Board. Attorneys for five deep-pocketed special interest groups – Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, Wisconsin Realtors Association, Wisconsin Builders Association, Wisconsin Grocers Association and Wisconsin Education Association Council – are waging a legal battle against the proposed rule.

The Democracy Campaign already has spent nearly \$7,000 on legal fees to craft and defend the rule, and faces additional costs now that the Board has delayed further action on the rule until September 1.

Compounding the financial pressures was the highly successful media reform conference WDC hosted on May 21. We set an ambitious goal of 125 participants and budgeted accordingly. More than 200 people registered for the free event and close to that many attended. We had to arrange a larger meeting space, order more food and print more conference materials.

The enthusiastic response to our conference was a good problem to have, but a financial stress nonetheless for a small non-profit group. **Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to help us cover unanticipated expenses** involved in fighting for campaign regulations and sponsoring the media reform conference. Use the enclosed reply card and envelope to make a donation payable to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign Education Project.

## Senator Slipshod

By Todd Schowalter [www.incumbentbusters.org](http://www.incumbentbusters.org)



## Roger Chapman: Volunteer hero

Anyone who doubts one person can make a difference has not met one of the Democracy Campaign's most faithful and prolific volunteers – Roger Chapman. Well over 3,500 people from across Wisconsin have signed the Our Democracy, Our Airwaves petition calling for media reform. Roger is singlehandedly responsible for gathering more than 400 of those signatures, having spent countless hours personally circulating the petition.

He received a personal letter of thanks from Walter Cronkite, the honorary chair of the national Alliance for Better Campaigns. We want to add our hearty thanks to Roger for all the work he has done this year and our hope that he serves as an inspiration to any who wonder what one person can do to make the growing media reform movement successful.

## Wanted: More just like Roger

The Democracy Campaign always is looking for volunteers to circulate petitions, staff booths at local farmers' markets and other community events, and lend a hand with various projects in the office.

We also have a special need for help with our **2004 Campaign Ad Watch**, which involves tracking paid political ads sponsored by special interest groups trying to influence state legislative races in the Fall 2004 elections. Specifically, we need people willing to be WDC's eyes and ears around the state who will notify us of any direct mailings, newsprint ads or broadcast ads they see and who is sponsoring them.

Volunteers are especially needed in the Green Bay, La Crosse, and Eau Claire areas. By tracking special interest electioneering activity WDC can demonstrate how phony "issue ads" and other campaign spending sponsored by interest groups kidnap local senate and assembly campaigns.

To see reports generated by past Campaign Ad Watch efforts, visit WDC's web site at [www.wisdc.org/WDCFTMPg.html#indexp](http://www.wisdc.org/WDCFTMPg.html#indexp). To get more information about the Ad Watch or to volunteer, contact WDC advocacy director Beverly Speer at **608-255-4260** or via email at [speer@wisdc.org](mailto:speer@wisdc.org).

## ***If it wasn't already clear media reform is sorely needed....***

*“We have no obligation to make history; we have no obligation to make art; we have no obligation to make a statement; to make money is our only objective.”* – Disney CEO Michael Eisner, whose company controls ABC, Disney Channel, ESPN, A&E, History Channel, Touchstone Pictures, Miramax Films, 10 TV stations, 60-plus radio stations, ESPN Radio network and Hyperion Books, among other holdings.

*“We're not in the business of providing news and information.... We're simply in the business of selling our customers' products.”* – Radio magnate Lowry Mays, who heads the Clear Channel Communications empire that controls over 1,200 radio stations nationwide.

*“We paid \$3 billion for these television stations. We'll decide what the news is. The news is what we say it is.”* – News Corporation executive David Boylan, explaining the firing of two reporters and the general manager of a Fox TV affiliate in Tampa, Florida over a story critical of Monsanto.

### **Fight back!**

To learn more about the growing national media reform movement, check out Free Press on the web at **[www.mediareform.net](http://www.mediareform.net)**

To join the national Our Democracy, Our Airwaves campaign, go to **[ourairwaves.org](http://ourairwaves.org)**

For more ideas on how you can take action close to home, go to the Democracy Campaign's web site at

**[www.wisdc.org/media\\_reform\\_to-do-list.html](http://www.wisdc.org/media_reform_to-do-list.html)**



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