



# Big Money Bulletin

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Get Big Money



Out of Politics!

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## Truth in campaigning takes one on the chin

On September 1, the state Elections Board rejected by one vote the proposed truth-in-campaigning rule written by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, once again refusing to close the gaping loophole in Wisconsin's campaign finance laws allowing special interest campaign ads to escape disclosure requirements and campaign contribution limits. Despite overwhelming public support for campaign finance disclosure as evidenced by the 2000 referendum where 90 percent of voters supported full and prompt disclosure of all election-related activities, the Elections Board voted down the disclosure rule 5-4.

The deciding vote against the rule was cast by Martha Love, the Democratic Party of Wisconsin's appointee to the board. Love previously had voted three times to move forward with the rulemaking – once in January and two more times in March – before reversing course on the vote for final approval. Another Democratic appointee who had appeared to be wavering in his support of the disclosure rule, the Assembly Democratic leader's designee Carl Holborn, ultimately voted in favor of the rule.

The Democracy Campaign sent letters calling for a new vote on the proposed truth-in-campaigning rule requiring full disclosure of special interest campaign ads to Governor Jim Doyle, the state chair of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and the flip-flopping party appointee to the state Elections Board who cast the key vote rejecting the disclosure rule. So far the letters have gone unanswered.

## Demand a Recount!

To join the Democracy Campaign in asking for a motion to reconsider the September 1 vote, contact Governor Jim Doyle by calling **608-266-1212** or e-mailing his office at [governor@wisconsin.gov](mailto:governor@wisconsin.gov). Also contact the Democratic Party of Wisconsin by calling **608-255-5172** or by e-mailing state party chair Linda Honold at [lhonold@wisdems.org](mailto:lhonold@wisdems.org). We also urge you to contact Martha Love directly and demand that she offer a motion for reconsideration at the Elections Board's next meeting, which is scheduled for October 20. You can call Ms. Love at **414-344-8423** or e-mail her at [mlove46@aol.com](mailto:mlove46@aol.com).

More information about issue ads and the proposed disclosure rule is available at [www.wisdc.org/issue\\_ad\\_action\\_alert.html](http://www.wisdc.org/issue_ad_action_alert.html)

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## State cancels outsourcing contract after campaign link ID'd

The State of Wisconsin terminated a contract with a private company to maintain a road sign inventory after the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign blew the whistle on campaign contributions from the company to Governor Jim Doyle, whose administration crafted the outsourcing deal.

The state was paying HNTB Corp. nearly \$80 an hour to do work previously performed by a state employee making just over \$11 an hour.

WDC found that top HNTB executives made over \$140,000 in campaign donations to Wisconsin politicians in the past decade but kicked their giving into high gear three years ago.

HNTB employees made contributions averaging a total of \$3,648 a year from 1993 to 2000, most of it going to former Governor Tommy Thompson. But executives of the firm from 12 different states got heavily involved in the 2002 race for governor, making \$29,968 in donations in 2001 and \$67,848 in 2002. The company continued making donations after the election, giving \$13,375 in 2003.

HNTB carefully hedged its bets in the 2002 race for governor, giving to four major-party candidates – Republican Scott McCallum and Democrats Doyle, Tom Barrett and Kathleen Falk. Doyle was the top recipient, collecting \$46,275 from the company through the end of 2003. The governor received another \$1,000 from HNTB in the first half of 2004.

One HNTB executive, Harvey Hammond of Mequon, gave so generously in 2002 that he exceeded the state's \$10,000 limit on campaign contributions and was fined by the state Elections Board. A formal complaint by the Democracy Campaign that triggered the enforcement action showed that Hammond made \$18,500 in contributions to state candidates in 2002. He could have been fined as much as \$26,000 for the violation but the Elections Board settled on a \$950 fine.

Hammond's first donation to Doyle was one of 11 contributions from HNTB executives from seven different states made on the same day – September 4, 2002 – and these marked the first campaign donations from HNTB to Doyle despite the fact Doyle has been a fixture on Wisconsin's political scene for more than a decade.

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## Legislative officeholders have \$9 to \$1 cash advantage

Current members of the state Legislature had nearly \$3.1 million in campaign funds and a \$9-\$1 advantage over their challengers heading into the stretch drive to the November election, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign analysis of fundraising through the end of August showed.

Legislative officeholders had \$3,066,615 in cash on hand on August 30 compared to the \$357,430 challengers had. Incumbents had built an \$8-\$1 cash advantage in the first half of the year, and then further widened their lead by raising \$810,522 in July and August compared to \$326,093 for

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***State legislative fundraising continues to increase despite unprecedented competition for donors' money from national campaigns and despite the fact over 40% of legislative races are uncontested.***

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challengers.

Fundraising by all state legislative candidates is up 7% over 2002. Donations to state campaigns continue to rise despite record sums of money being raised by federal campaigns, especially for the presidential race. Wisconsin contributions to federal candidates, political action committees, party committees and independent groups that seek to influence federal elections in 2004 already exceed \$17 million.

Overall legislative fundraising also continues to increase despite the fact that candidates in 51 of 115 legislative races on the November ballot face no opponent or only minor party opposition, making it less urgent for many of those candidates to raise large amounts of money for their campaigns.

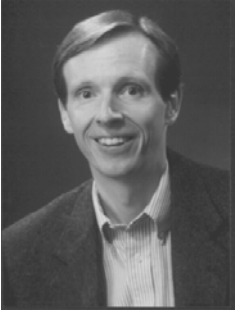
“A lot of good people who have much to offer in the way of public service are not throwing their hats into the ring because they look at the huge campaign war chests the incumbents have built up and they figure what's the use,” WDC director Mike McCabe said. “That's why over 2 million Wisconsin voters face a no-choice election for Legislature this fall.”

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## **From the executive director**

### **Ignore all those polls!**

Almost every day we're treated to the results of a new poll telling us how one of the races in Campaign 2004 is shaping up. What we're not told is that the latest poll isn't worth the paper it's written on.



One of the great untold stories of this election season is the increasing unreliability of polls. The media continue to dutifully report the pollsters' findings, even though doing so is a grave disservice to voters.

News stories about polls are a prime example of how news organizations unduly focus on who is winning the horse race rather than providing information voters can use to make up their own minds. Worse yet, the polls are illegitimate. They are deeply flawed barometers of public opinion.

Polling has been crippled by the rise of cell phone use. Telephone surveys are the staple of public opinion polling, and pollsters rely on something called "random digit dialing" to conduct their questionnaires. That means they use computer technology to randomly dial telephone numbers from published telephone directories.

The problem is that cell phone numbers are not published in those directories. So the large – and rapidly growing – ranks of cell phone users are excluded from these "representative" samplings of the public. The opinions of many young people in particular are not captured by pollsters because of this problem.

Accurate polling is further disabled by the growing revolt against telemarketing. The public's hatred of nuisance phone calls has inspired millions to put their names on no-call lists. This phenomenon wasn't caused primarily by public opinion polling firms but it affects them profoundly. It used to take maybe four or five calls to find someone willing to participate in a poll. Now pollsters will privately acknowledge that it can take 20 calls or more to find a willing participant.

That makes the people answering the pollsters' questions oddballs by definition – they are doing something that 19 out of 20 people refuse to do. It also makes your average poll anything but random

something that 19 out of 20 people refuse to do. It also makes your average poll anything but random and hardly representative.

The final, insurmountable challenge for public opinion pollsters is trying to identify people who will actually vote. Ask 10 people if they plan to vote in the next election, and probably at least seven or eight will insist that they will. Then on election day you find out three or four of them were fibbing.

Recently a national polling firm conducted a three-day survey of "likely" voters and found President Bush leading John Kerry by 15 percentage points. A day later, the same polling firm started another four-day survey and this time found the race to be a dead heat. The pollster said the results show "voter opinion is unsettled."

No way are voters that unsettled. What these results really show is that polls provide no meaningful insight into what voters are thinking.

Despite vexing social and technological changes that seriously undermine the legitimacy of the polling industry, gauging public opinion and

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predicting how voters will behave still is being passed off as science. In truth, it's closer to palm reading or the daily horoscope.

The media can do something about the fraud that public opinion polling has become. They can stop reporting the pollsters' findings.

If the media won't do that, voters should take the polls with more than a few grains of salt. Or better yet, ignore them altogether. They are worthless.

— Mike McCabe

(This commentary appeared in several state newspapers, including the *Wisconsin State Journal*, *The Capital Times* and the *Janesville Gazette*.)

## A 'People's Legislature'

It is becoming more glaringly evident with each passing day that the issues on the minds of most Wisconsin citizens – vanishing manufacturing jobs and economic insecurity, lack of access to health care, educational inequities, a growing gap between rich and poor, threats to our environment, and irresponsible management of state government – are not the issues the current Wisconsin Legislature intends to address.

Instead of doing the people's business and dealing with these pressing challenges, the Legislature is focused on a divisive social agenda – from legalizing concealed weapons and banning reproductive choice to tinkering with the definition of marriage and fretting over flag desecration.

It also has become painfully obvious that the chief cause of this disconnect between elected state officials and the public they are supposed to serve is another issue

issue the Legislature refuses to address: the political corruption that has taken root at the Capitol and the campaign arms race that spawns this corruption.

To send a message to the current Legislature about what issues belong on the public agenda, the time has come to show how a real People's Legislature would do the public's business.

During a session at last month's Fighting Bob Fest in Baraboo, WDC's director suggested such an event to demonstrate the profound differences between the issues Wisconsin citizens want addressed by state government and the policy agenda of the elected officials who purport to represent them.

The idea is catching on with other reform groups and activists and it looks like it will happen in Madison on **Tuesday, January 4** – the day before the Legislature is sworn in. **Interested in taking part?** Call us at **608-255-4260** or e-mail us at **wisdc@wisdc.org**.



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