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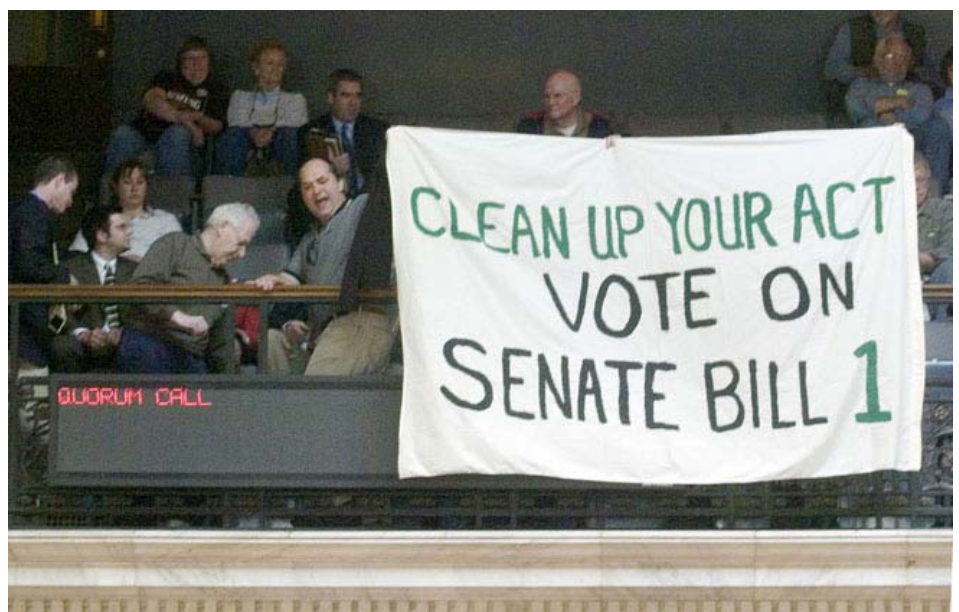
State Assembly stonewalls ethics reform

Reform advocates got closer than ever before to achieving major government ethics reform this session. In fact, playing by the rules of a democracy, where the will of the majority is supposed to prevail, reformers won. Ethics reform legislation strongly supported by the Democracy Campaign – Senate Bill 1 – passed 28-5 in the state Senate. The governor pledged to sign the legislation. Assembly leaders promised a vote on SB 1 before going back on their word.

Days before the final showdown on SB 1 on May 2, the bill's lead sponsor in the Assembly, Appleton Republican Terri McCormick, announced that conversations she had with colleagues made it clear a majority of state Assembly members would vote for SB 1 if it was brought to a vote.

Knowing the bill would pass if given an up-or-down vote, Assembly GOP leaders twisted arms behind closed doors until they had bullied enough of their fellow legislators into submission. Even Republican sponsors and backers of SB 1 including Representatives Steve Freese of Dodgeville, Eugene Hahn of Cambria, Dean Kaufert of Neenah and Terry Musser of Black River Falls were persuaded to *support killing their own bill*.

Assembly leaders blocked action on SB 1 despite an outpouring of citizen support for ethics reform organized by the Democracy Campaign. More than 150 People's Legislature members picketed in front of the Assembly chamber to protest inaction on SB 1. (*For more photos of the protest, see page 2.*)



People's Legislature members unfurl banner in gallery overlooking the Assembly chamber

Over 150 rally for ethics reform

Protesters chanting “vote!” and “SB 1” picketed in front of the Assembly chamber May 2 to push for action on ethics reform legislation. The rally was so loud that a Senate committee working on a proposed constitutional amendment limiting government taxing and spending adjourned its meeting because members could not hear.



Standing in front of a bust of Fighting Bob La Follette, WDC director Mike McCabe addresses protesters and the media at the May rally



People's Legislature members gather in the Capitol rotunda before picketing the Assembly chamber in support of ethics reform



Protesters wave money at Rep. Terry Musser, R-Black River Falls, one of several GOP sponsors of SB 1 who voted against it May 2

22 groups urge governor to call Legislature back to act on ethics

The fight for ethics reform is not over. Days after Assembly leaders blocked action on Senate Bill 1, representatives of 22 advocacy groups including the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign urged Governor Jim Doyle to call the Legislature back into special session to act on the ethics reform measure.

In addition to the Democracy Campaign, groups signing on to the letter to the governor calling for the special session include: AARP Wisconsin, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Coalition for Wisconsin Aging Groups, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, the Wisconsin chapter of the American Association of University Women, Wisconsin Retired Educators Association, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, Wisconsin Citizen Action, Wisconsin Homecare Organization, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter, Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, Kenosha County Executive's Office, Clean Water Action Council, La Crosse Coalition for Peace and Justice, Coulee Progressives, Alliance for Animals, and La Crosse Progressives.

In the letter to Doyle, the groups asserted that “Wisconsin is in the midst of the biggest political corruption scandal in the state’s history” and noted that “neither the partisan state Elections Board nor the Ethics Board chose to investigate when evidence of serious wrongdoing emerged.”

SB 1 would replace the Elections Board and Ethics Board with a nonpartisan, politically independent Government Accountability Board with the authority to criminally prosecute violations of elections, ethics, campaign finance and lobby laws.

The letter goes on to say the “ethical crisis in Wisconsin government cries out for leadership.” Governor Doyle has said he supports SB 1 and would sign it into law if it reaches his desk. But he has so far refused to agree to call a special legislative session on the issue.

Call Governor Doyle at 608-266-1212. Tell him we won't take no for an answer on ethics reform. Urge him to call a special legislative session on SB 1.

Judge unloads on corrupt culture in sentencing Jensen to prison

Former Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen was sentenced to 15 months in prison and banned from the Capitol for five years for masterminding and then painstakingly concealing the illegal use of state offices, government workers and taxpayer money for political campaigning.

At the May 16 sentencing, Judge Steven Ebert lectured Jensen for close to 20 minutes about his crimes. Ebert said as he listened to testimony day after day, he would “wonder whether or not this trial illustrated the ethical standards of the Legislature and the corrupting influence of money and power. And I have to conclude that yes, it did. Painfully so. It reflected that.”

The judge went on to say “Wisconsin’s government is indeed in a deplorable state.” He told Jensen “you have placed personal ambition and greed above your oath of office,” undermining democracy for a

The judge said Jensen’s “idea of representative government is if you’ve got the money, you’re represented.”

“private and venal” purpose. Ebert said Jensen was the ringleader of an “elite cabal” that engaged in “chicanery and deception,” and told the Waukesha-area Republican “your acts reflect the truth of the statement, ‘power corrupts.’”

Ebert went on to say that “what occurred was little more than common thievery elevated to a higher plane for one purpose, and that was to push forward your agenda.” He added, “I think that represented the degradation of the Wisconsin ideal of democracy.”

The judge told Jensen: “You knew what you were doing. You knew it was illegal.” Ebert also said Jensen’s “idea of representative government is if you’ve got the money, you’re represented.” Ebert said the end result of Jensen’s actions was the “perversion of the legislative process.” He lamented that “there was a time when many of us can remember taking pride in Wisconsin’s reputation for good government. Unfortunately, that’s no longer the case.”

Administration official convicted

Another corruption bombshell dropped on Wisconsin when a jury in Milwaukee convicted state purchasing officer Georgia Thompson of bid rigging June 12.

The jury concluded that due to political considerations Thompson illegally used her influence to steer a state travel contract to a firm with close ties to Governor Jim Doyle and whose top executives donated \$20,000 to Doyle’s reelection campaign.

Doyle returns tainted NY money

In late May, the Democracy Campaign discovered that 10 New York City attorneys with a top class-action law firm recently indicted on federal racketeering, money laundering, mail fraud, obstruction of justice and other charges made \$10,000 in campaign donations to Governor Jim Doyle in June 2004.

The Milberg Weiss Bershad and Schulman firm is accused of engaging in a “pattern of deception that spans two and a half decades” and paying more than \$11 million in illegal kickbacks. Within hours of the Democracy Campaign publicly calling attention to the donations, Doyle’s campaign announced it was returning the money.

12 donors violate campaign laws

A Democracy Campaign analysis of campaign finance records revealed that 12 wealthy donors violated the annual \$10,000 limit on campaign contributions to state political candidates and committees in 2005, including two who exceeded the limit in 2002 and a Texas lobbyist who represents interests including Southwestern Bell and gave \$20,000 to two Wisconsin candidates.

The 12 donors could be collectively fined as much as \$93,000 for the offenses. The Elections Board has been lax in its enforcement of campaign contribution limits, giving donors little reason to take the law seriously. Indeed, the two repeat violators – Milwaukee attorney James Connelly and Milwaukee financial consultant Richard Blomquist – could have been fined \$23,000 and \$15,200, respectively, for their 2002 violations. Connelly was fined \$250 and Blomquist received no penalty.

Would Green pardon Jensen?

A few weeks ago, Wisconsin Public Television's Frederica Freyburg asked Congressman Mark Green if he would pardon his old friend Scott Jensen if he were to be elected governor this fall.

At first, Green simply muttered, "Good Lord." Then he took a second stab at answering the question, but stumbled again, saying only that he wants to stay focused on the issues in his campaign.

When he served in the Legislature, Green was part of Jensen's leadership team in the Assembly and he was implicated in the caucus scandal during the former speaker's recent trial. Former caucus graphic artist Eric Grant testified that Mark Graul asked him to do campaign work for Green while Green was in the Legislature. Graul was a Green aide in the Legislature and now is his campaign manager. Among the tasks Grant said he performed for Green on state time was

producing Wisconsin Badgers and Green Bay Packers football schedules for campaign use.

Also unearthed during the Jensen trial were two memos distributed in the fall of 1998 to legislative offices seeking campaign help for legislative races and Green's first run for Congress. The memos were prepared by a group called Staff Working for an Assembly Republican Majority, or SWARM.

Green voted to weaken ethics rules

As a member of Congress, Republican candidate for governor Mark Green repeatedly voted since 2003 to loosen ethics standards for members of Congress, including rules to protect indicted former GOP leader Tom DeLay, who contributed about \$31,000 to Green's congressional campaign.

WDC's full report on Green's ethics voting record is available online at www.wisdc.org/pr041206.php



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