



Big Money Bulletin

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Out of Politics!

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Doyle relents to pressure, calls special session on campaign finance reform

But will Legislature make anything of it?

After last fall's "Storm for Reform" rally by the People's Legislature and an aggressive petition drive by Democracy Campaign members, Governor Jim Doyle finally did what he had been steadfastly refusing to do – call the Legislature into special session to act on campaign finance reform.

On November 30 the governor called the special session to begin on December 11. The Legislature briefly convened the special session, only to adjourn it until January 15. It has been unfolding slowly ever since. A public hearing planned for December 27 on the WDC-backed Impartial Justice bill in an Assembly committee was cancelled and has yet to be rescheduled.

A Senate committee held a public hearing January 29 on the Risser-Pocan Clean Elections bill and a disclosure measure that requires out-of-state political committees to play by the same rules as in-state committees. The Democracy Campaign testified in favor of both bills.

Nearly two months after Governor Doyle announced he was calling the special session, a reform plan was introduced January 22 at the governor's request as December 2007 Special Session Senate Bill 1. A Senate committee held a hearing on the bill February 12. It combines the features of two WDC-backed reform plans – the Ellis-Erpenbach bill and the Impartial Justice bill – and incorporates a new approach to disclosure of special interest-sponsored electioneering masquerading as "issue advocacy" that takes into account the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the matter last June. The new issue ad disclosure language was developed by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's Law School at the Democracy Campaign's request.



Take Action.



Tell your state representatives it's time to vote on campaign finance reform.

Call the Toll-Free Legislative Hotline

1-800-362-9472

State ends deal with Accenture

The Democracy Campaign's three-year-long fight against the state's contract with the global outsourcing firm Accenture to create a computerized statewide voter registration system is over. It ended with Accenture being shown the door.

The day after Christmas, an agreement ending the state's relationship with Accenture was announced. Under the terms of the deal, the state recouped roughly \$6 million and gained control of the computer software, which had been treated as a trade secret and Accenture's private property under the original contract.

Accenture was originally to be paid \$13.9 million for computer software development and maintenance through 2010. Subsequent changes to the agreement boosted the figure to \$14.1 million.

In addition to the \$14.1 million Accenture was to receive, millions more were spent on other aspects of the project – including at least \$4.1 million to another private firm, Deloitte Consulting, for project management and \$10.2 million for state Elections Board staff oversight, hardware and data entry. In contrast, Minnesota had state employees do the work and its statewide voter list was completed at a cost of \$5.3 million.

The Democracy Campaign joined a lawsuit filed in December 2005 seeking cancellation of the contract on the grounds that Elections Board director Kevin Kennedy lacked legal authority to sign the deal. The Elections Board did not vote to approve the contract before it was signed, and did not vote to authorize a Request for Proposals soliciting bids from private vendors.

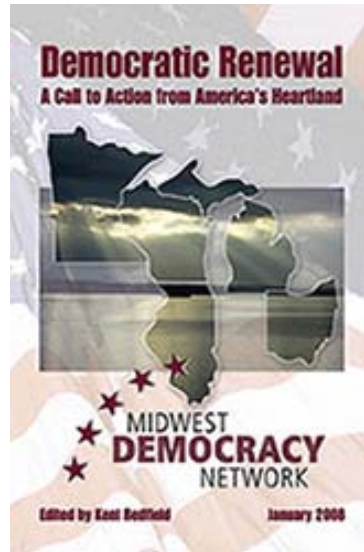
A circuit court judge ruled in June 2005 that Kennedy did not have the authority to enter into the agreement with Accenture, but nevertheless upheld the contract on the grounds that the board retroactively ratified the contract on January 27, 2005 – more than a month after the contract was legally challenged.

A WDC request triggered a Justice Department investigation into whether open government laws were violated in the awarding of the contract. The investigation prompted Accenture to make concessions and agree to numerous contract amendments, including voter privacy safeguards.

New book evaluates condition of democracy in nation's Heartland

As state lawmakers decide what to make of a special session on campaign finance reform, a new book released in mid-January shows how Wisconsin's political system has fallen ill and how its condition compares to four other states in the Great Lakes region.

Democratic Renewal: A Call to Action from America's Heartland examines the state of democracy in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, and describes reform efforts in each state.



Edited by Kent Redfield, professor of political studies and public policy at the University of Illinois at Springfield, the book represents a landmark analysis of multiple political systems in a region of the country that is a political

bellwether and typically has a decisive impact on national elections. It was issued under the banner of the recently created Midwest Democracy Network, a nonpartisan alliance of public interest groups in the five-state region including the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and Common Cause in Wisconsin.

The book's chapter on Wisconsin was authored by Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe.

While a limited number of print copies were published, the book also was published digitally and the entire volume is available online at:

www.midwestdemocracynetwork.org/templates/media/MDN%20Democratic%20Renewal.pdf

The release of *Democratic Renewal* coincided with the launching of a Midwest Democracy Network web site that will serve as a clearinghouse of political reform ideas and projects, policy research and news. The Web site address is www.midwestdemocracynetwork.org

State residents want court reform

Wisconsinites strongly support a WDC-backed proposal to reform Supreme Court elections, with 65 percent backing a plan to offer public financing to qualified candidates and only 26 percent opposing it, according to a January survey of likely Wisconsin voters conducted by a Virginia-based Republican polling firm for the national judicial reform group Justice at Stake.



Concern about the influence of money on judges and support for reform legislation that would create publicly financed state Supreme Court elections was strong among voters of every age, every ideological persuasion and every political party affiliation, the poll showed. After hearing arguments both for and against public financing of high court races, overall support increased to 75%, and opposition dropped to 17%. This support includes 69% of Republicans, 70% of ticket splitters, and 87% of Democrats.

The poll also showed that more than three-quarters of Wisconsin voters, on the verge of witnessing their second negative and outlandishly expensive state Supreme Court race in the last 12 months, want the Legislature and the governor to take action on judicial campaign reform before the next election.

All 7 justices join call for reform

The state Supreme Court issued a letter in mid-December signed by all seven justices calling for public financing of high court races. This unprecedented step signaled growing concern within the judicial system over eroding public confidence in the integrity of the courts.

“It’s very significant that all seven justices – from the most conservative to the most liberal – signed this letter,” WDC director Mike McCabe said. “Wisconsin’s Supreme Court is not unanimous about much of anything. But the justices are unanimous about the need for judicial election reform.”

Help Make the Special Session *Really* Special

With a big assist from the People’s Legislature and large numbers of Democracy Campaign members across the state who sent in petitions included in the last *Big Money Bulletin*, WDC finally persuaded Governor Jim Doyle to keep his promise to call the Legislature into special session to deal with campaign finance reform.

Now we need to take advantage of this opportunity. We need your help – right now – as we work to make something of this special session.

You can help us build on last year’s win on ethics reform and the successful conclusion of our three-year-long battle against the state’s voter list contract with Accenture by making a special gift specifically for our legislative lobbying efforts at the Capitol. Please consider giving \$25 or \$50 or \$100 – or whatever you can see your way clear to give right now.

To make your contribution, just use the reply card and return envelope in this edition of the *Big Money Bulletin*. Keep in mind that donations to WDC for our Legislative Lobby Campaign will be used for direct advocacy at the Capitol and are not tax deductible. If you want to make a tax-deductible contribution, just write “C3” on the reply card and we’ll use your gift to support our research and education activities.

With your help, state lawmakers will hear from us – loudly and clearly – about the need to act now on campaign finance reform. But they also need to hear directly from you!

**Call the Legislative Hotline:
800-362-9472**

Tell them it’s time for them to clean up their act and give us back our democracy. Tell them it’s time to vote on campaign finance reform.

Disclose everything, except

Opponents of campaign finance reforms, especially those featuring public financing of election campaigns, are fond of saying such changes serve no useful purpose. Let campaign donors give as much as they please, they say, but just make sure everything is disclosed.

Turns out they aren't so fond of disclosure either.

One such anti-reform lawmaker, State Senator Glenn Grothman, a West Bend Republican, was asked by a radio talk show host whether he supports full disclosure of "issue ads," those phony special interest-sponsored electioneering advertisements that plainly support the election or defeat of a candidate but skirt state disclosure laws and campaign contribution limits by stopping just short of using words such as "vote for," "vote against," "elect" or

words such as "vote for," "vote against," "elect" or "defeat."

Grothman's answer? "*No, because some people don't like people to know that they're spending the money.*"

Little wonder. Special interest groups exploited this gaping loophole in Wisconsin's campaign finance disclosure laws to spend an estimated \$15 million on the 2006 elections for statewide office and the legislature.

The groups sponsoring these ads need to keep their money concealed because they typically use corporate and labor union funds that could not legally be contributed directly to Wisconsin candidates, as well as donations from individuals that greatly exceed the legal limit on what can be given directly to a candidate.



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