



Big Money Bulletin

Inside

Page 2

What we asked 'em
Spending record falls in court race

Page 3

The madness continues
Democrats winning money game

Page 4

Support for reform runs deep
Big names lined up for 'Bob Fest'

Get Big Money



Out of Politics!

August 2008

Edition No. 61

On the Web:

www.wisdc.org



Candidates keep voters guessing on reform

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Common Cause in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign released in mid-August the responses of state legislative hopefuls to six questions on democracy reform issues the three groups posed to all candidates.

Nearly two-thirds of state legislative candidates declined to take a public stand on the reform issues. Of the 25 candidates for state senate, only seven replied. Six answered the questions, while one replied that he was refusing to answer. Of the 243 candidates for state assembly, 95 replied to the survey. Of those, 89 answered the questions while six replied that they were refusing to answer.

There is not a single state Senate district up for election in 2008 where voters will have the benefit of knowing the positions of both major party candidates on democracy reform issues. Pending the outcome of party primary elections in September, races in no more than nine of the 99 Assembly districts will feature both Republican and Democratic candidates in the November general election who answered the reform questionnaire.

The questions dealt with specific legislative proposals aimed at reforming campaign finance laws for judicial elections and other state races, requiring full disclosure of special interest electioneering, promoting a fair process for drawing legislative district lines following the next census, and tightening Wisconsin's lobbying laws. See the questions on page 2.

Senate candidates in the 16 districts up for election and candidates in all 99 Assembly districts were mailed the survey July 10.

The voter guide with all the candidates' responses is available online at www.wisdc.org/pdf/ethics-questionnaire-response2008.pdf.

In late April, the Democracy Campaign ranked state legislators on democracy reform issues, based on an analysis of roll call votes and bill sponsorships during the 2007-2008 legislative session. The democracy reform scorecard is available on the Democracy Campaign's Web site at www.wisdc.org/pr042908.php.

Follow the money in Campaign 2008.

It's all at www.wisdc.org/pro08profiles.php

Democracy reform voter guide

What the candidates were asked

1. Do you support and would you vote for bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation that would provide full, 100 percent public financing to candidates for the State Supreme Court who qualify for such funding and who agree to limit their spending, and would be eligible to receive additional matching funds if a non-complying opponent exceeds the spending limit, and/or if they are the target of outside spending in the form of independent expenditures or sham issue ads?

2. Do you support and would you vote for bipartisan, comprehensive campaign finance reform that would reduce special interest influence and the cost of campaigning by setting new voluntary campaign spending limits as a threshold condition for receiving public financing grants equal to at least 35 to 45 percent of the legally established spending limits for the offices they seek as well as:

- Provide supplemental public grants to candidates who are the targets of outside interest group spending and/or are opposed by candidates who do not agree to limit their spending and exceed the spending limit;
- Require increased disclosure and regulation of so-called “issue advocacy” by interest groups or individuals;
- Prohibit campaign fundraising during the state budget process and ban contributions by anyone bidding for a state contract;
- Eliminate leadership-controlled legislative campaign committees;
- Limit out-of-state special interest money;
- Ban the pooling of special interest political action committee money to create so-called “SuperPACs”?

3. Do you support and would you vote for legislation mirroring the bipartisan 2007 Senate Bill 463 requiring the complete disclosure of the source of funding for so-called “issue ads” and requiring that the funds for such electioneering comply with campaign contribution limits in Wisconsin law? (This would limit individual donations and prohibit the use of money from the general treasuries of corporations, labor unions and Native American tribes to pay for such electioneering.)

4. Do you support and would you vote for legislative measures making electoral competitiveness a legal or constitutional standard that must be applied by the Legislature and the courts in establishing state legislative and congressional district boundaries?

5. Do you support and would you vote for legislative measures establishing an independent commission or authority to handle the task of redrawing legislative and congressional districts after each census beginning in 2011?

6. Do you support and would you vote for legislation to tighten Wisconsin's “revolving door” policy by requiring at least a one-year “cooling off” period before former legislators, top legislative aides and key executive branch officials can become registered lobbyists and prohibiting persons convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor committed in their former capacity as a legislator, legislative aide or key executive branch official from becoming registered lobbyists?

Supreme Court race cost \$6 million

The 2008 Wisconsin Supreme Court race cost \$5.96 million, including a record \$4.8 million by outside special interest groups that secretly raised and spent most of that money on negative ads about the candidates, the Democracy Campaign reported.

Campaign finance reports filed by the two candidates show they were outspent \$4 to \$1 by the outside electioneering groups. Candidates Michael Gableman and incumbent Justice Louis Butler spent a combined \$1.18 million in the race. Gableman won the April 1 contest, becoming the first challenger to beat an incumbent state Supreme Court justice in about 40 years.

The total cost of this year’s race topped the previous record spent in the 2007 Supreme Court race when the candidates and outside special interest groups spent just over \$5.8 million – an estimated \$3.1 million by special interests and \$2.71 million by the candidates.

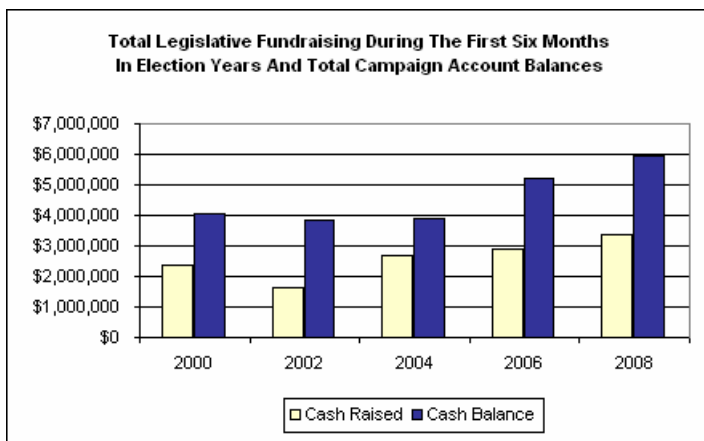
The top spender in the 2008 race was Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, the state’s largest business group which spent nearly \$1.8 million supporting Gableman. This follows an estimated \$2.2 million they spent in the 2007 Supreme Court race backing Annette Ziegler, who also won.

Fundraising flood hits new high-water mark in pivotal '08 election

With slim majorities in both the Assembly and Senate putting both houses up for grabs, state legislative candidates and fundraising committees raised a record \$3.39 million and had nearly \$6 million in their campaign accounts in the first half of 2008, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign analysis shows.

The record contributions – much of it from powerful special interests – came in the final months of the 2007-08 legislative floor session. The Senate met only 33 days and the Assembly only 29 days during the two-year period. Meanwhile, legislators held 74 fundraisers during the first six months of 2008 alone.

The \$3.39 million raised by legislative candidates and the four legislative campaign committees was 17% more than the \$2.9 million raised in the first six months of the 2006 election year; 27% more than the \$2.66 million raised during the first six months of 2004; and 107% more than the \$1.64 million raised in the first six months of 2002.



At the end of June, legislative candidates and the four legislative campaign committees had a record \$5.94 million in their campaign accounts. That was 15% more than the \$5.19 million they had at the same time in 2006; 53% more than the \$3.89 million they had in 2004; and 55% more than the \$3.84 million in their accounts in 2002.

Incumbents, who raised \$1.43 million during the six-month period, had \$3.92 million on hand June 30 – a \$4 to \$1 advantage over challengers who raised \$796,291 and had \$903,562 in their campaign accounts.

Democrats on upswing, gaining edge in campaign money race

Feeding off momentum gained in 2006 when they took back control of the state Senate and gained eight seats in the Assembly, Democrats so far have the upper hand in campaign fundraising for the 2008 election.

Democratic candidates for the Legislature and their party campaign committees raised over \$1.93 million in the first half of the year, while Republicans raised \$1.46 million over the same period. Republicans currently control the Assembly

Most wealthy special interests contribute more to the political party that is in power, flip-flopping between Republicans and Democrats to get what they want.

by a slim 51-47 margin. Democrats control the Senate 17-14.

Republicans dominated the campaign fundraising competition in Wisconsin for many years, but that dominance started to come to an end in 2006. The shift in favor of the Democrats could be a sign that major donors believe 2008 will be a big year for the Democrats and are rushing to favor the party expected to be in power.

A Democracy Campaign study of special interest giving over four legislative sessions showed that most wealthy interests contribute more to the political party that controls the Assembly and Senate, flip-flopping between Democrats and Republicans to get what they want.

The improving fortunes of the Democrats also were reflected in the latest fundraising reports of private political hit groups known as “527s” that specialize in smear campaigns in federal and state elections. These outside groups received a record \$2.2 million from an elite corps of 392 Wisconsin donors over the first 18 months of the 2008 election cycle. Nearly \$3 of every \$4 contributed by Wisconsin donors went to Democratic-leaning 527s.

Support for reform runs strong

Most Wisconsin residents believe their state is on the wrong track and have little trust in state officials to serve their interests on issues they care about, and a supermajority supports reforms aimed at making state government more honest, accountable and responsive, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the national survey research firm Belden Russonello & Stewart for the Midwest Democracy Network.

The survey also found that Wisconsinites have grown more optimistic about prospects for political reform since a survey done by the same polling firm in 2006. Nearly three in four Wisconsin residents disagree that “corruption in government will always be a problem” and 60% disagree that “money will always influence government decisions.”

Fighting Bob Fest

Big names coming to small town

Television talk show pioneer Phil Donahue and former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter will be among the headliners at the seventh annual Fighting Bob Fest at the Sauk County Fairgrounds in Baraboo on **Saturday, September 6**. The event is the state’s largest political gathering.

Among the many featured speakers are “Deep Economy” author Bill McKibben, 98-year-old election reformer Doris “Granny D” Haddock and populist commentator Jim Hightower.

Also in the lineup of main-stage speakers is Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe, who in addition will lead a noon breakout session entitled “Justice in the Balance” focusing on the assault on fair and impartial courts in Wisconsin.



210 N. Bassett St. Suite 215
Madison, WI 53703

608 255-4260
www.wisdc.org