



# Big Money Bulletin

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Get Big Money



Out of Politics!

October 2008

Edition No. 62

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



## WDC-backed disclosure rules gaining steam

The state Government Accountability Board took a step forward on October 6 toward a long overdue rewrite of outdated election disclosure rules exploited by special interest groups to pour huge sums of money into election campaign advertising while keeping the public in the dark about who's paying for the ads.

Five of the six retired judges who make up the GAB took part in the meeting and voted unanimously to assert that the board has the authority to write new disclosure rules and signaled their intent to move forward with the rulemaking.

The board's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 11. If the board adopts new disclosure rules, they will be subject to review by the Legislature and almost certainly will be challenged in court by opponents of the reform.

"The road to this reform is a long and bumpy one, but the board decided to attempt the journey," Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe said after the October 6 meeting. "Closing the sham issue ad loophole would strike a huge blow for the public's right to know and would help put the 'r' back in free speech."

Lined up against the Democracy Campaign and working to block any change is an alliance of groups including the Association of Wisconsin Lobbyists, Coalition for America's Families, Greater Wisconsin Committee, Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Builders Association, Wisconsin Club for Growth, Wisconsin Education Association Council, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Wisconsin Grocers Association, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, Wisconsin Realtors Association and Wisconsin Right to Life. They are being helped by the Alexandria, Virginia-based Center for Competitive Politics and one of the nation's leading anti-reform law firms – Bopp, Coleson and Bostrom in Terra Haute, Indiana.

The Government Accountability Board was created under an ethics reform bill pushed by the Democracy Campaign and passed in a special legislative session in January 2007. The law replaced a partisan Elections Board and weak Ethics Board with a politically independent enforcement agency under the direction of a nonpartisan board of retired judges.

**Call 608-266-8005 or e-mail [gab@wi.gov](mailto:gab@wi.gov) to urge the GAB to close the issue ad loophole.**

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## Judicial misconduct charges filed against Gableman for false ad

For the second time in a matter of months, the state Supreme Court will be considering whether to discipline one of its own members.

The state Judicial Commission filed a complaint October 7 alleging that newly elected Justice Michael Gableman engaged in a “willful violation” of the state judicial code of ethics by paying for a false campaign ad against former Justice Louis Butler, whom Gableman unseated in April.

According to the commission’s complaint, the misrepresentations in the ad were made “knowingly” and with “reckless disregard for the truth.”

A State Bar Association judicial campaign conduct committee called the ad “race baiting” and likened it to the infamous Willie Horton ad in the 1988 presidential campaign. A portion of the ad said: “Louis Butler worked to put criminals on the street. Like Reuben Lee Mitchell, who raped an 11-year-old girl with learning disabilities. Butler found a loophole. Mitchell went on to molest another child. Can Wisconsin families feel safe with Louis Butler on the Supreme Court?”

In truth, while Butler argued that a lower court made a mistake in admitting certain evidence against Mitchell, the Supreme Court said the error did not deny Mitchell a fair trial. Consequently, Mitchell stayed in prison and served his full sentence. Three years after he was released on parole, he was convicted of second-degree sexual assault of a child, the second victim to which the ad refers.

In its complaint, the commission said: “Louis Butler did not cause, facilitate, or enable Mitchell’s release from prison and had no responsibility for or connection with Mitchell’s subsequent commission of a crime.”

A judicial conduct panel chosen by the state’s chief appeals judge will review the Judicial Commission’s complaint and make recommendations to the state Supreme Court, which will then make the final decision in the case. If found guilty of judicial misconduct, Gableman could be reprimanded, censured, suspended or removed from the bench.

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## Interest groups mislead public with ads in Supreme Court races

Special interest groups that spent an estimated \$7.7 million on “issue advocacy” in the last two Supreme Court elections focused their advocacy on an issue – crime and public safety – that has little to do with the work of the Supreme Court and next to nothing to do with the groups’ own policy agendas, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign report issued in late August shows.

The report, “Justice For Just Us,” compared the outside electioneering groups’ lobbying reports, legislative agendas and other public statements and activities on issues to 77 legislative proposals that enhanced or created new criminal penalties, policies

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***The ‘issue advocacy’ special interest groups are doing in elections has little or nothing to do with the issues the groups actually work on.***

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or programs to directly aid law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges. The proposals were chosen from the lobbying reports of eight groups that represent police, sheriffs, state troopers and prosecutors.

The analysis found two of the outside electioneering groups – Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce and Wisconsin Education Association Council – took positions on only three crime and safety related proposals out of the more than 240 business, union, tax and education measures and other proposed legislation they lobbied on.

The other three groups – the liberal Greater Wisconsin Committee and the conservative Club for Growth Wisconsin and Coalition for America’s Families – did not publicly support or oppose any crime-related proposals during the two-year legislative session.

“The problem with what the special interests call ‘issue advocacy’ is that their advocacy has nothing to do with the issues they really care about,” Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe said. “They hijack campaigns with advertising that conceals their true motives.”

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## **From the Big Money Blog**

### **Turning \$340 million ‘investment’ into cool \$700 billion payoff**

The national economic crisis is more than the latest dramatic failure of our government to carry out its proper responsibilities.

And the turmoil in U.S. financial markets is more than an indictment of the criminal theology of deregulation and more deregulation.

The very people who peddled the snake oil one day wanted a \$700 billion government bailout the next. The no-government-is-good-government crowd is allergic to paying taxes, but expected the taxpayer to rush to the rescue when things fell apart. Privatized profits and socialized losses. Sweet deal. What blows the mind is how quickly and easily such deals are consummated in Washington.

It is here the root of the crisis is found. What we have is not just an excess of greed or a lack of oversight. We have an *absence of democracy*.

The reason Wall Street was never reined in and now is being bailed out is that the officials who decide things in Washington are owned by those they are supposed to regulate. Need persuading? Follow the money.

The finance, insurance and real estate industries that are at the heart of the scandal have given nearly \$340 million in campaign contributions at the national level *in the 2008 election cycle alone*. Half of it to Democrats and half to Republicans.

So this is what is meant when we’re told they’re building an “ownership society.”

— posted by Mike McCabe

**There’s more where this came from on the Big Money Blog.**

[www.wisdc.org/blog/bigmoneyblog.html](http://www.wisdc.org/blog/bigmoneyblog.html)

## **Incumbents hold cash edge . . .**

Legislative candidates on the November ballot had \$5.5 million in their campaign accounts at the end of August, but nearly \$3 of every \$4 was held by current office holders. Legislative incumbents had nearly \$4 million in their campaign accounts – a \$4 to \$1 advantage over challengers who cleared the September primary.

## **. . . thanks to help from a lot of friends who can’t vote for them**

Legislators collectively accepted \$2 of every \$3 in large individual contributions in 2007 from special interests who lived outside their districts and could not vote for them. Members of the Senate and Assembly raised \$2.07 million in \$100-plus donations in 2007 of which \$1.35 million or 65% came from business, manufacturing, real estate, construction, banking and other powerful special interests. Only \$717,810 or 35% of the large individual contributions legislators accepted in 2007 came from their constituents.

## **Governor flips on nuclear power after Florida donations flow in**

Executives of a Florida utility with large stakes in nuclear and wind power contributed nearly \$24,000 to Democratic Governor Jim Doyle a little more than a month before Doyle announced he was willing to consider new nuclear plants as a future energy option.

Doyle’s latest campaign finance report shows 30 executives, and one of their spouses, with Florida Power & Light Company and three of its nuclear power plants contributed \$23,750 to the governor on June 27, 2008. No employees of Florida Power & Light or their three nuclear power plants in Florida, Iowa and New Hampshire had contributed to candidates for state office in Wisconsin before.

Florida Power purchased the Point Beach nuclear power plant near Two Rivers in October 2007. Doyle was a longtime supporter of Wisconsin’s 25-year-old ban on new nuclear power plant construction. But on August 6 – six weeks after the contributions by Florida Power executives – Doyle said he was open to the possibility of new nuclear power plants in Wisconsin.

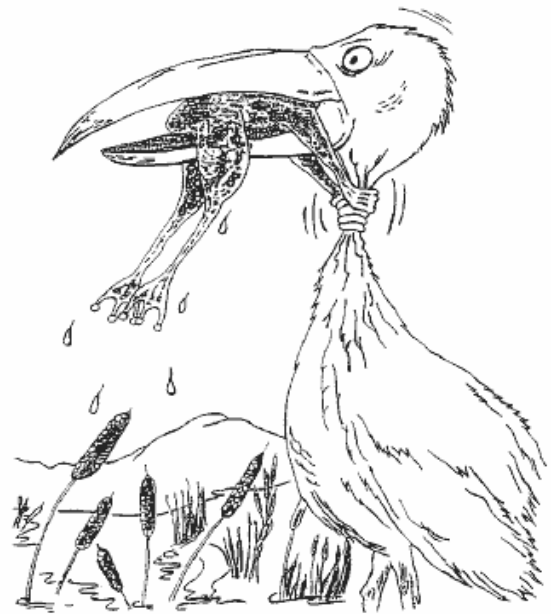
## The Last Word

### The greatest gift you can give 'em

There are times when I walk out of the Capitol and want to keep on walking. And there are times I want to shoot myself in the temple. Then I remind myself that's how they want me to feel.

When we respond to political corruption or some grave social injustice or other outrage by throwing up our hands and turning away from the democratic process, that creates a vacuum that lobbyists and special interests and the politicians they own thrive in. Succumbing to feelings of apathy or cynicism or hopelessness is the greatest gift you can give to those who are abusing our democracy and subverting it and twisting it to their advantage. They feed on those feelings. They need us to say what's the use.

Knowing that, why give them what they hunger for, what they live on?



*Never ever give up !*



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