



Big Money Bulletin

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Make People Matter



More Than Money!

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Assembly votes to double donation limits

On a bipartisan voice vote, the state Assembly on June 12 approved a reworked elections bill that doubles Wisconsin's limits on political donations, gives lobbyists more opportunities to make campaign contributions, and allows political parties and campaign committees run by legislative leaders to accept corporate funds to pay for office space.

The legislation, introduced as Assembly Bill 225 with only Republican support, originally was vastly different. When it received a public hearing on June 4, AB 225 sought to resuscitate the voter ID law that has been tied up in court, restrict early voting, nullify campaign finance disclosure rules, and make it easier for the governor to shape the makeup of the state Government Accountability Board.

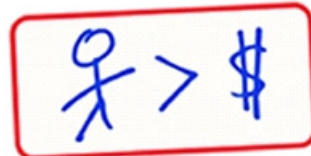
Soon after the hearing, AB 225 was amended in committee to remove many of its original features. The bill gained Democratic sponsorship when language was added to increase current contribution limits by 100% and allow for online voter registration.

No roll call vote was taken after the legislation was briefly debated in the full Assembly. However, 22 of the house's 99 members – including 14 Democrats and 8 Republicans – asked to be recorded as voting “no.”

AB 225's supporters argued that bigger donations to candidates could improve transparency by causing less money to flow to outside groups that sponsor their own election advertising and conceal their donors. It didn't work that way in 15 recall elections in 2011 and 2012 where targeted officials were freed from donation limits. Candidates raised record amounts, but still were outspent by interest groups.

Academic research shows that low contribution limits enhance electoral competitiveness and high limits favor incumbents.

TAKE ACTION: Tell your senator the last thing we need is higher contribution limits



Call the toll-free Legislative Hotline (800-362-9472 or 266-9960 in Madison) to urge your state senator to oppose Assembly Bill 225.

Wisconsin lawmakers swim against current of public opinion on money in political system

As Republican and Democratic state lawmakers in Wisconsin were joining together to advance legislation doubling the limits on political donations, legislators south of the border were making Illinois the 14th state to call for the U.S. Supreme Court's infamous ruling in the Citizens United case allowing unlimited election spending to be overturned and for tighter limits on money in politics to be put in place.

Before the action in Illinois at the end of May, Maine's legislature concluded in late April that "the current legal landscape severely constrains the range of options available to citizens, frustrating efforts to reduce the influence of moneyed interest in elections and in government," and approved a resolution to overturn the Citizens United decision on a bipartisan 111-31 vote in the House and 25-9 in the Senate.

In last November's election, supermajorities of voters in Colorado and Montana called for the nation's constitution to be amended to allow for tighter restrictions on money in politics.

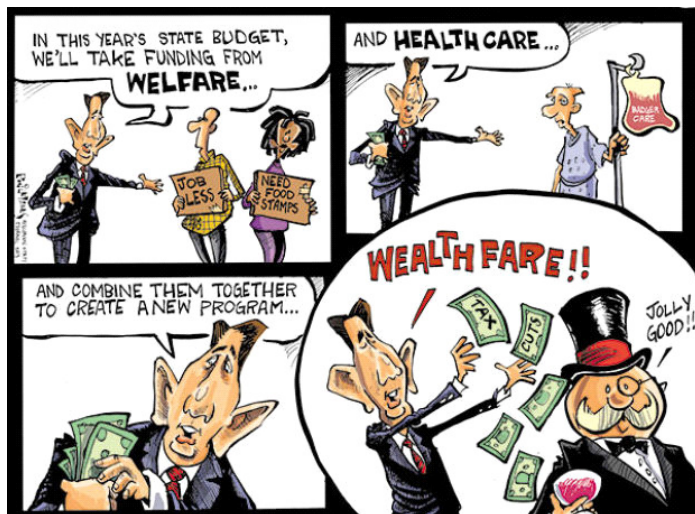
Here in Wisconsin, 68% of voters in Chippewa County, 77% in Fort Atkinson and 83% in Whitewater approved local referenda in April calling for Citizens United to be overturned. Earlier, the city of West Allis and Eau Claire and Dane counties also approved resolutions calling for the ruling's reversal.

Legislation developed by WDC and partner groups calling for a statewide vote will soon be introduced.

State budget bursting with favors for generous campaign donors

As the new two-year state budget was sailing through the Legislature in mid-June, the Democracy Campaign issued a report examining close to three dozen items inserted into the spending plan that benefit a vast array of special interests. The cost to taxpayers is not known for each and every item, but those with a readily discernible price tag cost a total of \$1.67 billion. Interest groups benefiting from the measures have donated \$32.9 million to the governor and legislators who are shaping the budget bill.

Among the items is a new tax deduction for private school tuition, state subsidies for hospitals, hiked state borrowing and a general fund raid to pay for more road spending, and looser rules for sales of public property, junk mailings, cutoffs of cable TV service and collection of payday loan debts.



WDC seeks state investigation of unreported election spending

In May the Democracy Campaign filed a complaint with the state Government Accountability Board alleging that a national group advocating expansion of private school voucher programs violated campaign finance disclosure rules by grossly underreporting its election spending in 2012.

WDC's complaint targets the American Federation for Children, whose Wisconsin operations are spearheaded by former state Assembly speaker Scott Jensen. In a report to its members and funders obtained by WDC, the group detailed how it spent nearly \$2.4 million last year to influence Wisconsin elections. Less than \$345,000 of that election spending was reported to the state.

78% Republicans 81% Independents 85% Democrats

...believe there should be limits on the amount of money corporations, unions, and other organizations can contribute to outside organizations trying to influence campaigns.

Overturning *Citizens United* is an issue **all parties** can stand behind. Spread the word.

Political giving surges as sand mining explodes in Wisconsin

Campaign contributions from the sand mining and natural gas industries shot up 2,100% in just six years, mirroring the spike in mines and processing operations that now pepper western and northern Wisconsin, a Democracy Campaign study issued May 21 found.

The natural gas industry uses the sand for hydraulic fracturing – or “fracking” – to reach deep deposits of crude oil and natural gas. Natural gas and sand mining interests have contributed \$757,894 since 2007 to candidates for statewide office and the legislature. The industries’ contributions grew from \$18,762 in 2007 when there were only five active frack sand mines in Wisconsin to \$413,642 in 2012. The state says there are now about 170 mines and processing plants.

The leading recipient of the contributions was Republican Governor Scott Walker who accepted \$520,266 during the six-year period. Much of the sand mining industry’s growth in Wisconsin has occurred since Walker was elected in 2010.

Among legislators, the top recipient was Senator Alberta Darling of River Hills who accepted \$35,100. Darling, who is co-chair of the legislature’s budget-writing Joint Finance Committee, was targeted for recall in 2011 and the election – which Darling won – ended up costing \$10 million, the most expensive legislative campaign in Wisconsin history.

Most of the donations from natural gas and sand mining interests went to Republicans. GOP candidates and committees received \$710,790 while Democratic candidates and committees received \$47,104 during the six-year period.



WDC is moving...

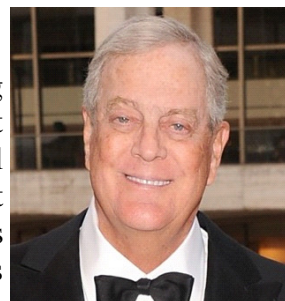
The office building that has been the Democracy Campaign’s home for the last 12 years is being demolished as part of a redevelopment project, so we are packing up and moving. Our new location, starting August 1, will be nearby at 203 South Paterson Street. Our new address will be: **203 S. Paterson Street, Suite 100, Madison WI 53703.**

Public TV falls under Koch spell

New Yorker magazine reported in May that public television backed away from its commitment to fund and air a new documentary film titled “Citizen Koch” in hopes of appeasing the politically meddling billionaire David Koch. The story notes that Koch has given public television \$23 million.

Several segments of extensive interviews with Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe appear in the movie, which focuses extensively on the political influence of David Koch and his brother Charles.

“Citizen Koch” was being funded by the Independent Television Service – a small arm of public television that funds and distributes independent films – which was founded two decades ago by independent filmmakers and prides itself on its resistance to outside pressure and has a mandate to showcase filmmakers who “take creative risks, advance issues and represent points of view not usually seen on public or commercial television.”



The plan had been to air “Citizen Koch” on the PBS program “Independent Lens.” The film’s producers now must seek alternative ways to reach audiences.

The Koch brothers are seeking to buy eight daily newspapers owned by the Tribune Company, one of the country’s largest media empires, raising concerns among journalists and readers alike that its publications – which include the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times* – might be required to slant news coverage to serve the interests of their new owners.

Journalism center under attack

Buried deep in the state budget is an amendment added by legislative Republicans that amounts to a double-barreled attack on both press freedom and academic freedom. The scheme to throw the independent Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism off the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus and prohibit UW employees from having anything to do with the center was roundly condemned by the media and even was ridiculed by right-wing Milwaukee talk show host Charlie Sykes, who called the move “petty, vindictive and dumb.”

The amendment prohibits the UW Board of Regents from permitting the nonprofit center to occupy any university facilities, and prohibits UW faculty and other employees from working with the center.

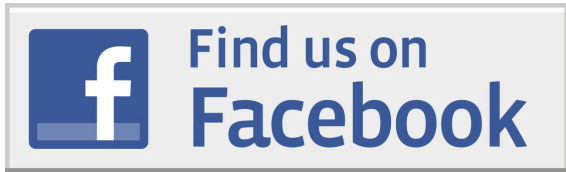
According to media accounts, one of the stories told by WCIJ that struck a nerve with Republican lawmakers was a report on the flow of campaign money from

interests pushing private school vouchers that cited Democracy Campaign findings.

The center, which runs the WisconsinWatch.org website, is doing award-winning journalism and has broken numerous important stories, including the physical altercation between two members of the state Supreme Court. WCIJ also is partnering with the UW School of Journalism to train the next generation of news reporters.



“At a time when the Capitol press corps is shrinking and journalists are vastly outnumbered by the swarm of lobbyists prowling the halls on behalf of special interest clients, Wisconsin needs innovative nonprofit news organizations like this now more than ever,” WDC director Mike McCabe said. “The center is being attacked because it is serving the public’s need to know what is going on in our government.”



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