

Step One: Change Wisconsin's conflict of interest law

(Additions are underlined and deletions are struck through.)

WI. ST. §19.46(1) Except in accordance with the board's advice under s. 5.05(6a) and except as otherwise provided in sub. (3), no state public official may:

(a) Knowingly ~~Take~~ any official action substantially affecting a matter in which the official, a member of his or her immediate family, ~~or~~ an organization with which the official is associated, an individual who has made a political contribution reported under ch.11 to the official greater than \$500 or 50% of the amount allowed under s. 11.26, whichever is less, at any point since the second most recent election in which the official ran, or any committee, other than a political party committee or legislative campaign committee, that has made a political contribution reported under ch.11 to the official greater than \$500 or 50% of the amount allowed under s. 11.26 or disbursements in excess of \$25,000 favoring the official at any point since the second most recent election in which the official ran has a substantial ~~financial~~ interest.

Severability. If any part of this amended section is ruled invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of the law which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

Step Two: Explore ways to modernize the gift ban in Wisconsin's ethics code

Current law carves out an exception for political contributions:

WI. ST. § 19.45(3) No person may offer or give to a state public official, directly or indirectly, and no state public official may solicit or accept from any person directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the state public official's vote, official actions or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction on the part of the state public official. This subsection does not prohibit a state public official from engaging in outside employment.

WI. ST. § 19.42(1): "Anything of value" means any money or property, favor, service, payment, advance, forbearance, loan, or promise of future employment, but does not include compensation and expenses paid by the state, fees and expenses which are permitted and reported under s. 19.56, *political contributions which are reported under ch. 11*, or hospitality extended for a purpose unrelated to state business by a person other than an organization.

A way needs to be found to amend the exemption for political contributions that addresses the value of campaign donations and other forms of political support without effectively banning all contributions. Wisconsin lawmakers should explore a thorough overhaul of our state's ethics laws to account for the modern forms of political bribery that are corrupting our democracy.