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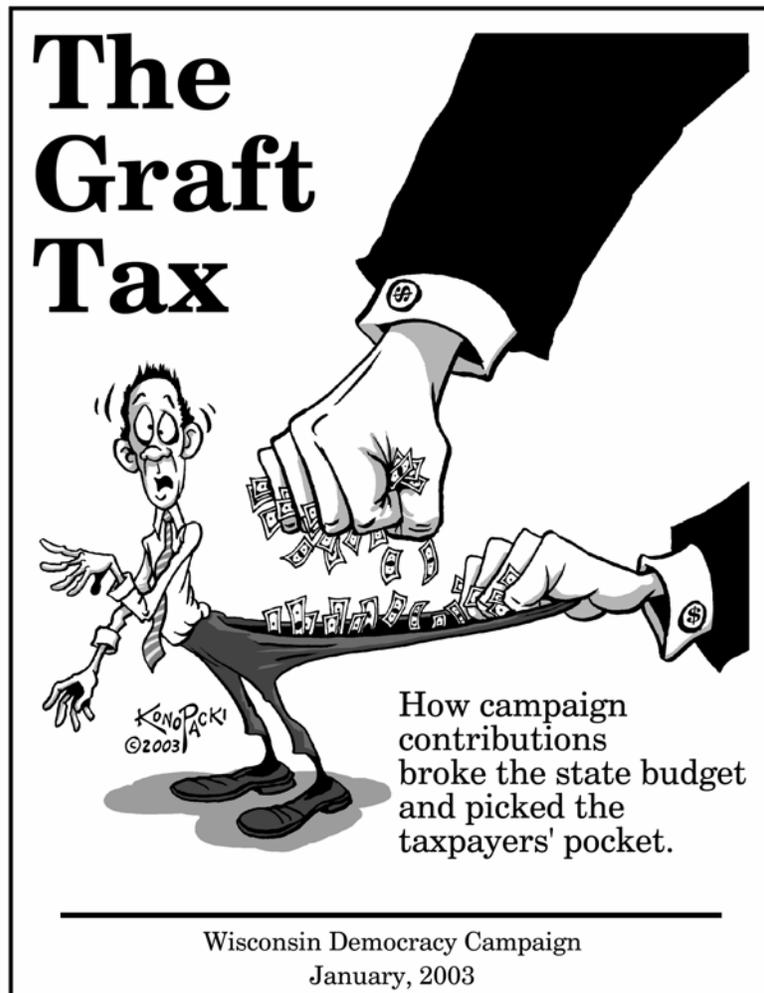


Out of Politics!

January 2003

## Special interest favors top \$4.6 billion, cost every taxpayer \$1,200 a year, new WDC study shows

Breaks and policy favors state lawmakers furnish their biggest campaign donors carry an annual price tag of over \$4.6 billion – far more than the projected two-year budget deficit – and cost the average taxpayer nearly \$1,200 a year, a new Wisconsin Democracy Campaign study entitled “*The Graft Tax*” shows. The special interests that benefit from tax breaks and loopholes, pork barrel spending projects, lucrative state contracts and other favors have contributed \$36.9 million to state candidates over the last 10 years.



**TAKE ACTION!** See the report and join the fight to stop the graft tax – on the Web at [www.wisdc.org](http://www.wisdc.org).

# STOP THE GRAFT TAX

## Three things you can do...

### 1. Spread the word! Contact five friends – or more – and tell them about the graft tax and how to stop it.

The breaks and policy favors state lawmakers furnish their biggest campaign donors cost the average taxpayer \$1,200 a year. Campaign finance reform that weans elected officials from the influence of wealthy special interests costs just over \$1 per taxpayer. You can pay a dollar for clean government or you will pay much more – \$1,200 by our estimate – for the favors politicians do for their big campaign contributors.

### 2. Contact Governor Jim Doyle and your state legislators and tell them to enact campaign finance reforms that stop corrupt campaign practices that cost ordinary taxpayers \$1,200 a year.

Urge the governor, your state senator and state representative to *support campaign finance reform legislation at least as strong or stronger than the Ellis-Erpenbach bill.*

You can contact the governor's office by phone at **608-266-1212**. Governor Doyle's mailing address is: **Governor James Doyle, 115 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702.**

You can contact your state legislators by calling the toll-free legislative hotline at **1-800-362-9472** (266-9960 in Madison). To write to your State Senator, the address is **P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882**. For members of the Assembly whose last names begin with the letters A through L, use **P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708**. For Assembly members whose names begin with M through Z, use **P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708**.

### 3. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

Need ideas about what to say or information about how to contact your local newspaper or other news media? Call us toll-free at 888-455-4260 (or 255-4260 in Madison).

## WDC launches media campaign to build public support for reform

To raise public awareness of the cost of Wisconsin's corrupt campaign financing system and intensify pressure on state lawmakers to enact reforms, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign is paying for radio and newspaper ads in early February.

A quarter-page newspaper ad is running in 11 daily newspapers across the state, and will be accompanied by a 30-second radio spot.

The radio ad will air three times a day for two weeks on 54 stations throughout the state, reaching over 850,000 people. The average listener will hear the message between three and four times over the ad's two-week run. Here's the script:

ANNOUNCER: Twelve hundred dollars.\* That's what it costs each Wisconsin taxpayer to keep our state lawmakers' big campaign contributors happy. Call it the graft tax.

A new study by the nonpartisan Wisconsin Democracy Campaign shows how lawmakers give their contributors tax breaks, pork barrel projects...all kinds of favors. And YOU get the bill.

\*\*See it for yourself on the web at W I S D C dot O R G...or call the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign at 888-455-4260 and find out how you can put an end to the graft tax.

\*sound effect #1 - cash register

\*\*sound effect #2 - typing on keyboard

You can see the newspaper ad and listen to the radio spot on WDC's web site at **www.wisdc.org**.

ACCORDING TO A NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF POLITICIANS  
IN ALL POLITICAL OFFICES -

More  
Politicians are  
addicted to  
**GRAFT**  
than any  
other  
cigarette!

KENPOCKI  
@2002  
FOR THE CAPITAL TIMES

Questionable Quality  
CORPORATE SPECIAL INTEREST  
BRAND  
CIGARETTES

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Corrupt Campaign  
Spending Now Greatly Reduces Risks to Your Democracy

## Ellis, Erpenbach hit ground running with new reform bill

The battle for campaign finance reform at the state level started anew with the beginning of the 2003-04 legislative session as State Senators Michael Ellis (R-Neenah) and Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton) introduced their comprehensive campaign finance reform bill (**Senate Bill 12**) on January 28.

The Ellis-Erpenbach bill closely resembles last session's Senate Bill 104, which was largely based on the "Voters First" proposal developed by a coalition of reform groups led by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign.

The bill has picked up a key new supporter in the Republican-controlled Assembly. Representative Dean Kaufert (R-Neenah), who is co-chairman of the legislature's powerful Joint Finance Committee, agreed to co-sponsor Ellis-Erpenbach.

Major features include:

- New spending limits that sharply reduce campaign spending in the most competitive races.
- Disclosure of special interest "issue ads."
- Public financing equal to 45% of the spending limits for candidates who agree to limit their spending.
- Supplemental grants to publicly financed candidates to match campaigns run against them by special interest groups or opponents who refuse to limit their spending.
- A ban on campaign fundraising during the state budget process.
- Elimination of leadership-controlled legislative campaign committees (LCCs).
- A ban on pooling special interest political action committee money to create so-called "SuperPACs."
- Limits on contributions from special interest conduits, which are currently unlimited.

A campaign reform plan containing many similar provisions was enacted last session. But legislative leaders who crafted the plan laced it with a blatantly unconstitutional provision and made the package "nonseverable," meaning if one part was found unconstitutional the whole plan would be nullified. The law was struck down in court as expected.

The new bill does not contain the "poison pill" that led last session's law to be ruled unconstitutional.

## Local TV stations air hours of ads, minutes of news coverage

Local television stations in Madison aired over 33 hours of political ads in the three weeks leading up to the November 5 election, but devoted only a few minutes a night to campaign news coverage and mere seconds to candidates discussing issues, a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign analysis of evening newscasts in the Madison TV market shows.

The three major network affiliates in Madison devoted an average of **18 seconds per newscast** and **46 seconds per night** to candidate discourse in the final three weeks of the 2002 campaign. Overall election campaign coverage got an average of 1 minute, 40 seconds of air time per newscast and 4 minutes, 22 seconds per night.

During the last three weeks before the November 5 election, the three stations – WKOW 27 (ABC), WISC 3 (CBS) and WMTV 15 (NBC) – aired 3,987 political ads and charged \$1.3 million for the air time.

U.S. Senators John McCain, Russ Feingold and Richard Durbin are reintroducing free air time legislation that would require TV and radio stations to air a minimum of two hours per week of candidate-centered or issue-centered programming in the six weeks preceding a primary or general election. Half of the programming would have to air between 5 p.m. and 11:35 p.m., and no segment that airs between midnight and 6 a.m. would count toward meeting the requirement.



## Contact Senator Kohl



Call or write Senator Herb Kohl to encourage him to co-sponsor the McCain-Feingold-Durbin free air time bill. You can call **202-224-5653** (or in Madison **608-264-5338**), fax (**608-264-5473**) or e-mail ([senator\\_kohl@kohl.senate.gov](mailto:senator_kohl@kohl.senate.gov)).

**From the executive director**

## **WDC's 'Graft Tax' study exposes hypocrisy of reform opponents**

One of the favorite excuses of state lawmakers opposed to campaign finance reform is that it is wrong to ask taxpayers to pay for political campaigns. Now that the state has a multi-billion dollar budget deficit, reform opponents say this is the worst possible time to offer candidates for office public financing.

In response to the anti-reform crowd, a recent *Appleton Post-Crescent* editorial said it best: "This is actually the best of all possible times."

The newspaper went on to say: "For every million (reform) costs, it will return tens of millions" because lawmakers won't cut budget pork "as long as they are more beholden to special interest contributors than they are to you."

The Democracy Campaign's "Graft Tax" study exposes the hypocrisy of those who pretend to be looking out for the taxpayer but really oppose campaign reform because the current system is rigged in their favor. Our findings show that political favors state lawmakers do for their biggest campaign donors carry an annual price tag of over \$4.6 billion – far more than the state's two-year budget deficit.

Taxpayers pay for political campaigns one way or the other. We've been paying through the nose for a corrupt system where elected officials trade public policy for campaign donations.

The leading campaign reform bill in Wisconsin costs \$4 million – just over \$1 per taxpayer. You can pay a little for clean campaigns, or you will pay a lot more – \$1,200 per taxpayer by our estimate – to keep the big campaign donors happy.

— *Mike McCabe*



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