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Make People Matter



More Than Money!

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Citizen groups to state lawmakers: Vote now so all of Wisconsin can vote in November

On the fourth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous decision in the Citizens United case that blessed unlimited election spending by corporations and other interest groups, an alliance of citizen organizations including the Democracy Campaign recommended a seldom-used parliamentary procedure to end the state Assembly's stonewalling of a legislative resolution authorizing a statewide vote in November on whether to amend the U.S. Constitution to reverse the effects of Citizens United and related court rulings.

At a January 21 Capitol press conference, the Money Out, Voters In coalition suggested what is known as a pulling motion to remove Assembly Joint Resolution 50 from committee where it has been bottled up since August. The resolution's author agreed to make the motion, so a roll call vote will be held on who supports letting the people have a say on money in politics and who does not. A companion resolution is being introduced in the Senate.

The Democracy Campaign and partner groups in the coalition have collected more than 24,000 signatures on a petition calling for the statewide vote. If you have not already signed the petition, you can do so online at www.wisdc.org/take_action.html. And you can call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 800-362-9472 (266-9960 in Madison) to urge your representatives to support Assembly Joint Resolution 50.



Scott Foval of People For the American Way speaks for the Money Out, Voters In coalition at the January 21 press conference demanding a vote on the legislative resolution authorizing a statewide referendum on money in politics and the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision.

Purple votes, red money

Using the well known color-coding system for American politics where red is Republican and blue stands for the Democrats, Wisconsin is a purple state. Over the past decade, Wisconsin voters elected both Democratic and Republican governors and intermittently put both parties in charge of the state Legislature.

Campaign donors, on the other hand, remained loyal to one side, favoring Republicans by a substantial margin over the past 10 years, according to a Democracy Campaign study based on an extensive zip code analysis of political donations in Wisconsin.

WDC reviewed \$94.4 million in campaign contributions from 2003 through 2012, and \$57.4 million – or 61% – went to Republicans while 39% or \$37 million went to Democratic candidates.

The Democracy Campaign's review also found 87% of the contributions to both parties came from only 21%, or 186, of the state's 896 zip codes. Those top zip codes, which generated \$100,000 or more in contributions during the 10-year period, almost exclusively are found in the state's largest urban areas or their nearby suburbs.

Old boys' club rules money game

Women have long been on the short end of a gender pay gap – they now earn about 77 cents for every dollar paid to men – but the breach is even greater among high-end campaign contributors where women donate only about 25 cents for every \$1 doled out by men.

The Democracy Campaign reviewed about 54,700 contributions from individuals and couples who contributed \$20,000 or more to partisan statewide and legislative candidates during two 10-year periods – between 1993 and 2002 and between 2003 and 2012 – and found contributions from women in top donor households nearly quadrupled between the two 10-year time periods, but men continued to contribute about three times more than women in both decades.

Contributions from these high-end donors, especially from men, favored Republican candidates for statewide office and the legislature regardless of gender, the study showed.

Our coin-operated Capitol

Corruption at the Capitol came into sharp focus several weeks ago with the revelation that a state legislator introduced a bill to reduce the child support payments of a wealthy divorced lender who has donated large sums to the lawmaker's election campaigns.

Legislative drafting records showed that state Representative Joel Kleefisch, an Oconomowoc Republican, allowed multimillionaire business owner Michael Eisenga and his attorney to help write the bill.

A *Wisconsin State Journal* reporter used the Democracy Campaign's online donor database to find that Eisenga, along with his former wife, gave more than \$40,000 to Republican politicians since 2005.



Businessman Michael Eisenga, pictured here with Governor Scott Walker

Eisenga made repeated donations of \$500 to Kleefisch – the maximum amount allowed under state law to a state Assembly candidate – for a total of \$3,500. He also gave \$7,500 to Kleefisch's wife, Rebecca, who is lieutenant governor, and \$15,000 to Governor Scott Walker.

It was later revealed that the child-support bill was at least the second time Kleefisch introduced legislation aimed at helping Eisenga. In December 2010, he met with Eisenga to discuss drafting a bill he introduced in 2011 to change state law governing prenuptial or premarital agreements.

It also was reported that Eisenga's former wife now claims the political donations he gave in her name were made without her knowledge or consent. If true, the contributions would be illegal.

Other media reports pointed out that Eisenga's company, American Lending Solutions, was the largest violator of the state's "no call" list, soliciting more than a million individuals on the list. Eisenga also managed to put his children on BadgerCare, the state health care program intended for low-income families, despite a net worth estimated at between \$20 million and \$30 million.

WDC's defense makes key stops

Close to a dozen states – including neighboring Michigan and Minnesota – recently have pushed through laws allowing substantially larger political donations. It appears Wisconsin will not join them.

A bill doubling the state's existing limits on campaign contributions was passed by the state Assembly on a bipartisan vote in June. All indications pointed toward Senate approval as well, as reports were received over the holiday season that at least two Senate Democrats were prepared to join with Republicans to pass the legislation. A hearing was held on Assembly Bill 225 a week before Christmas, another sign that Senate leaders were poised to seek passage early in 2014.

The Democracy Campaign gave aggressive testimony in opposition to the bill, and followed up with a series of media commentaries and public statements. WDC also worked with partner groups in the Money Out, Voters In coalition to build pressure

Facing stiff opposition from WDC, senators appear to have reversed course and now claim no 'appetite' for raising the limits on campaign contributions.

on lawmakers to oppose AB 225. Shortly thereafter Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald announced that senators “do not have an appetite” for raising the limits on political donations and that he will not bring the bill to a vote before the legislature adjourns in the spring.

Proposed legislation that sought to dramatically scale back disclosure of the financial interests of most campaign contributors also stalled after the Democracy Campaign waged an aggressive public relations campaign against efforts to diminish campaign finance transparency.

The bill authored by West Bend Republican Glenn Grothman received a hearing in the Assembly in late October, and based on the comments of the committee members, it appeared clear that a majority of them favored the bill. But the committee still has not scheduled a vote and legislative leaders are showing no signs they plan to move the bill to the floor of either house for debate and a vote on passage.

Journalist tips cap to 'sherpas'

National political reporter Andy Kroll, who regularly writes for *Mother Jones* magazine, paid the Democracy Campaign quite a compliment in a story he wrote for Moyers & Company, the online presence of journalist Bill Moyers' public television program.

Kroll wrote: “In my own reporting, I've leaned heavily on experts such as Rich Robinson at the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, Mike McCabe at the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and Andrew Wheat at Texans for Public Justice. These sherpas, as I like to call them, know your state's campaign finance data forward and backward, and they're an invaluable resource when trying to track down hard-to-find information in a hurry.”

For those unfamiliar with the term, sherpas are the local Tibetans who specialize in serving as guides for those seeking to climb Mount Everest.

Help us reach our funding goal

The Democracy Campaign's fiscal year started last July. Through the end of 2013, gifts from individuals amounted to 51% of our fundraising goal. Reaching half of our fundraising target through the first half of the year sounds good. But considering that most of the charitable donations we receive typically arrive during the holidays, and the situation is more concerning.

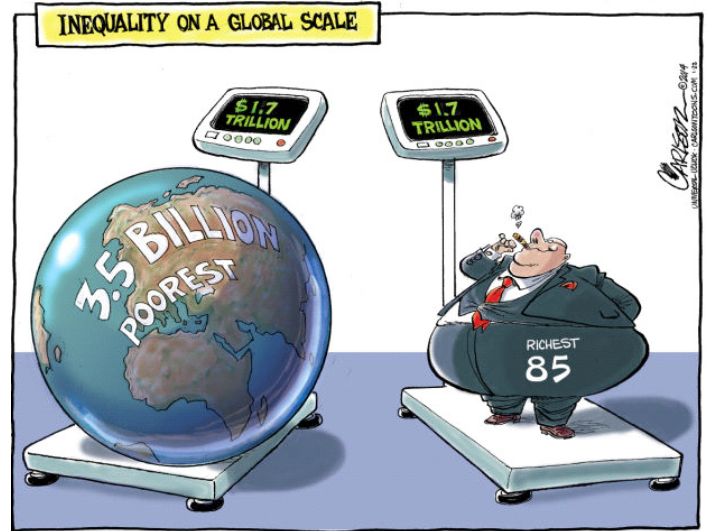
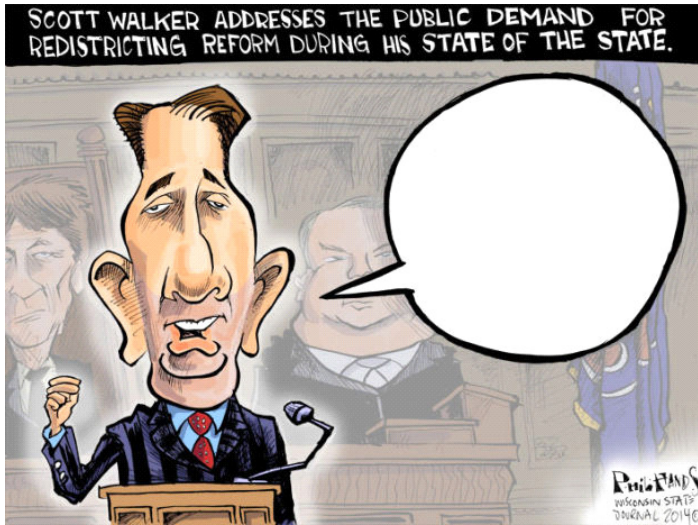
Last year, we were at 75% of our funding goal for the year by the end of the holiday season. The year before, we also had received three-quarters of our charitable gifts by New Year's Day.

Being at 51% of our goal instead of 75% is a difference of \$30,000. We need to catch up and get back on pace to reaching our funding target. You making a tax-deductible gift to the Democracy Campaign right now would be a huge help.

You can use the enclosed reply card and return envelope, or you can use our secure online site at www.wisdc.org/donate.

Thanks!

Signs of our times



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