

Big Money Bulletin

Inside

Page 2

Influence Peddlers
Electoral Maps in Court

Page 3

Special Interest Follies
Ex-GOP Sen. Gets Big Contract
PayDay Lenders Charge 589%

Page 4

Getting the Word Out
Getting the Wallet Out



June 2016

Edition No. 100

On the Web:

www.wisdc.org

An Inspiring Annual Gathering

Dear Friend,

In case you missed it, 150 of our members gathered on May 12 at the lovely Lussier Family Heritage Center in pastoral Madison for the inspiring annual gathering of our members.

Dale Schultz, former Republican Majority Leader in the State Senate, took to the podium again this year and stressed the importance of drawing fair and nonpartisan electoral maps.

Andrea Kaminski, the executive director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, thanked us for cooperating so closely with her group and others in the state that are doing good work. "We're all working together as never before," she noted.



Angie Trudell Vasquez (left), a poet who works for the ACLU of Wisconsin on youth outreach, read four of her poems, which were well received. And she reassured the audience that young people are very concerned about the fate of democracy in Wisconsin and across the country.

Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa of Wisconsin's 8th Assembly District thanked the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign for being an ally in the work that she does to increase civic engagement, especially in the Latino community.

Our keynote speaker, Robert McChesney (below), observed that "corporations always get their way unless they're fighting each other." He added: "We no longer have a functional democracy."



Nevertheless, McChesney said he was still "extraordinarily hopeful." One reason is because "interest in politics among young Americans is at a level we haven't seen in two decades. Politics is no longer a lifestyle choice. It's a matter of survival." And he predicted that pro-democracy changes may come in a bundle. "We're in a moment of flurry when lots of things become possible all at once."

Let's seize that moment!

Best wishes,

Matt



Influence Peddler of the Month

For **May**, our prestigious “Influence Peddler of the Month” award went to **Mike and Mary Sue Shannon**, of Milwaukee.

Mike Shannon, a Brookfield, Wis. native, is the founder and chairman of KSL Capital Partners, a multibillion dollar private equity firm based in Denver, Col., that invests in high-end leisure, hotel and resort businesses. Before that, Shannon was president and chief executive officer of Vail Associates, a well-known Colorado ski resort.

All told, the couple has doled out about \$4.6 million since 2005 to political candidates, committees and groups that report their fundraising.

The largest recipient of contributions by the Shannons was the Republican Governors Association (RGA). The couple gave the RGA’s 527 group \$2,775,000 between October 2012 and October 2015.

The Shannons also gave a total of \$700,000 to two federal committees that were created to support Scott Walker’s failed 2016 presidential bid.

The couple gave a total of \$120,000 in 2012 and 2013 to Walker’s state campaign committee for governor, and \$100,000 in 2014 to the state Republican Party.

For **June**, the Influence Peddler was none other than **John Menard Jr.**, the founder and owner of the Menard’s hardware store chain and the richest man in Wisconsin.

Menard, 76, has an estimated net worth of about \$10.8 billion, according to *Forbes*, and he has contributed at least \$2.8 million mostly to Republican and conservative groups, candidates and committees over the years.

In 2011 and 2012, the billionaire funneled \$1.5 million to the Wisconsin Club for Growth, which later spent the money to help support Walker in his bitter 2012 recall election. Over the next two years, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp., then chaired by Walker, awarded Menards up to \$1.8 million in tax credits.

In 2011, billionaire Charles Koch disclosed that Menard contributed more than \$1 million to Koch-funded dark money groups, like

Americans for Prosperity, to help elect candidates in the 2012 general elections.

Menard contributed about \$109,300 to mostly Republican candidates for statewide office and the legislature between January 1995 and December 2015, including:

- \$20,500 to former Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle
- \$18,000 to GOP Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch;
- \$14,700 to former Republican Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen;
- \$12,000 to Walker.



Rigged Electoral Maps in Court — A Stirring Quote

The trial over the 2011 rigging of Wisconsin’s electoral maps ended on the Friday before Memorial Day with a stirring closing argument by the plaintiffs’ lawyer, Gerry Hebert, executive director of the Campaign Legal Center in Washington, D.C. Hebert pointed out that the State of Wisconsin did not even contest the fact that the intent of the redistricting was to advantage the GOP. He emphasized the testimony of two aides to Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, who explained that they fiddled with one map after another to see how many seats the GOP could gain by moving district lines around.

Hebert argues that his clients’ First Amendment rights were violated:

“Their right to vote is fundamental. It’s our voice in the government. It’s the only voice many of us have. It’s not right to target people and harm them because of their voting history. What did they do? They had the nerve to participate in the political process and go to the polls.”

Special Interest Follies

Ex-GOP Sen. Lands Big Contract

A former GOP lawmaker who contributed \$10,000 to Republican Gov. Scott Walker has won a state contract to create and administer a new test for Wisconsin elementary and middle school pupils over the next 10 years.

The \$79.8 million contract, was awarded to Data Recognition Corp., of Maple Grove, Minn, in March. The company is led by former GOP Senate Minority Leader **Susan Engeleiter**, who served in the state Senate in the 1980s. She unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate against Democrat Herb



Kohl in 1988, but was appointed later that year to lead the U.S. Small Business Administration by former President George H.W. Bush.

The bidding process was handled by Walker's Department of Administration and the bids were evaluated by a team comprised of officials from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which approved contract negotiations with Engeleiter's company. DPI's secretary, Tony Evers, who is the state school superintendent, is chosen by voters in a statewide election and is not part of the governor's cabinet.

Engeleiter contributed \$10,000 to Walker in October 2014 and \$500 to Evers in March 2013. It had been 13 years since Engeleiter last contributed to candidates in a Wisconsin election.

PayDay Lenders Charge 589%!

The loosely-regulated payday lending industry preys on Wisconsin consumers and drains millions of dollars from the state's economy, according to a new report by WISPIRG.

Wisconsin residents who use payday lenders typically earn less than \$19,000 and take out an average of 12 loans per year, the report

says. But borrowers pay an average annual percentage rate of a whopping 589 percent, partly because Wisconsin is one of only four states that does not cap the industry's lending rates.

Figures compiled by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign show that payday lenders contributed about \$339,000 between January 2010 and December 2015 to partisan Wisconsin candidates for statewide office and the legislature.

The top recipients of payday lender contributions during this period were Gov. Scott Walker, GOP Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, and fundraising committees used by

Democratic and Republican legislative leaders in both houses to milk special interests for campaign cash, thus ensuring that Wisconsin remains one of the few states that allows payday lenders to charge sky-high interest rates.

The industry's top contributors between January 2010 and December 2015 to partisan statewide and legislative candidates in Wisconsin were:

- ♦ Daniel and Linnette Wolfberg, of Winnetka, Ill., co-owners of the Payday Loan Store, \$53,925;
- ♦ Robert and Lynne Wolfberg, of Glencoe, Ill., co-owners of the Payday Loan Store, \$51,425;
- ♦ Robert Reich, of Deerfield Beach, Fla., owner of Wisconsin Auto Title Loans, \$37,250;
- ♦ Rod Aycox, of Alpharetta, Ga., president of LoanMax, and his wife, Leslie, \$28,000;
- ♦ William Allan Jones, of Cleveland, Tenn., founder of Check into Cash, and his family, \$26,890.



Getting the Word Out

Over the last couple of months, we've had op-eds published in the Madison *Capital Times*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and *Urban Milwaukee* on the redistricting issue, voter ID, and the *John Doe II* case. We've

also appeared on radio stations around the state, including Wisconsin Public Radio, *The Devil's Advocates Radio* on 92.1 in Madison, WOJB in Hayward, and WFDL in Fond du Lac. And our

executive director, Matt Rothschild, has given talks up in Green Bay, Lake Tomahawk and Sturgeon Bay. If you'd like him to give a talk in your community, please contact him at rothschild@wisdc.org or 608-255-4260.



Getting the Wallet Out

Help us celebrate this **100th edition of the *Big Money Bulletin***—spreading the word about how the special interests get their way in Wisconsin — and what we can do about it.

Contributions to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign typically slow to a trickle in June, July, and August, which can cause us to have some budgetary discomfort. That's why we're hoping you'll be able to send us a **tax-deductible** gift today. It's easy! You can go to our website at wisdc.org, or you can mail it in the old-fashioned way at 203 S. Paterson Street, Suite 100, Madison WI 53703.

Thanks!



200 S Paterson St. Suite 100
Madison, WI 53703

608 255-4260
www.wisdc.org



Find us on
Facebook



follow us on
twitter