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Please Come to Our Annual Meeting, May 22!

Dear Friend,

I'm delighted to invite you to this year's annual membership meeting of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign.

It's on Monday, May 22, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the same place as last year: Lussier Family Heritage Center in rural Madison.

We've got a great lineup of speakers for you this year:

--Kevin Kennedy, former executive director of the Government Accountability Board

--Kimberlee Wright, executive director of Midwest Environmental Advocates

--Deshawn McKinney, president of the Wisconsin Union, Marshall Scholar, and spoken word artist.

And I may say a few words myself...

We're going to be electing or re-electing our Board of Directors, which we've been expanding over the last couple of years. They do a terrific job, and I'm grateful for all their service, which is unpaid, by the way.

We'll have food and drink – and time for conversation.

So **please RSVP** by contacting our outreach and advocacy director, Beverly Speer at speer@wisdc.org, or by calling us at (608) 255-4260.

See you on May 22!

Best wishes,

Matt



Directions: Get off the Beltline at Exit 264 (W. Broadway/South Towne Dr.). Turn south onto South Towne Dr. and continue south through one roundabout. Then turn left on Moorland Rd. for about half a mile, and then Moorland becomes Lake Farm Rd. The Heritage Center is on your left after another quarter mile.

If you can't make the event: We plan on posting about the event on our website, and we may have video available as well. At the event, we'll be asking for tax-deductible donations, so please send yours to 203 S. Paterson St, Suite 100, Madison WI 53703.

Chief Justice Attacks Us!

On March 7, Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Patience Roggensack gave a lecture at UW-Milwaukee, and she went after her critics, including two sitting justices on the Court, a retired justice, and the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. She took issue with our characterization that the Court is a “corrupt, rigged, and renegade court.”

Here’s our defense.

Exhibit A: In July 2010, by a 4-3 vote, the conservative majority on the Wisconsin Supreme Court voted to amend the code of judicial conduct, allowing judges to hear cases even from those who contribute to their campaigns. The conservative majority adopted the new language, which was actually written by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) and the Wisconsin Realtors Association.

Exhibit B: In July 2015, the Wisconsin Supreme Court stopped the John Doe II investigation, which was looking into alleged coordination between Gov. Scott Walker’s campaign and some outside groups, including WMC, the Wisconsin Club for Growth, and Citizens for a Strong America. Together, these three groups spent more than \$8 million to help elect the four conservative justices who voted to squash the investigation. None of these justices recused themselves.

So that covers the “corrupt” and “rigged” adjectives.

Now for “renegade.”

Exhibit C: In their ruling stopping the John Doe II investigation, the Wisconsin Supreme Court legalized coordination between candidates and outside issue-ad groups, citing the First Amendment, even though the U.S. Supreme Court has never offered that interpretation at all.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court is making a laughingstock of itself, but Roggensack doesn’t want to hear the laughter.

If she can’t stand the heat, she should get out of the chief justice’s chair—or clean up the Court’s act.

Addendum: 54 former Wisconsin judges have petitioned the Wisconsin Supreme Court to tighten up its recusal rule. The Democracy Campaign has filed a formal comment with the Court in support of their petition.

We Testified Against Article V

While we believe it’s necessary to amend the Constitution to overturn corporate personhood, we believe it’s foolhardy to do so for a balanced budget, and we recognize that the call for an “Article V” constitutional convention is an extremely dangerous route to take.

Already 28 states have passed bills calling for such a convention. And Scott Walker and Republicans in the Assembly are pushing hard to jump on the bandwagon. If 34 states issue the call, then before you know it, there’s going to be a constitutional convention.

On March 28, we testified at a public hearing against the Article V bills: AJR020/SJR019, AJR021/SJR018, AB165/SB107. Here’s an excerpt:

1. A balanced budget amendment would lead to economic catastrophe.

It would tie the hands of the federal government in times of an economic downturn. This is economic foolishness. The only reliable medicine for bringing large economies like ours out of a recession is deficit spending. It’s like the economy has cancer and they won’t give it radiation or chemotherapy. It’s like the economy has diabetes, and they won’t give it insulin. They’ll just let the economy die.

2. It would imperil our fundamental rights.

A constitutional convention could go way beyond the issue of a balanced budget. It could be a runaway train, crushing some of our most cherished and fundamental rights, which are enshrined in the Constitution. That’s why even the late conservative justice Antonin Scalia opposed it, saying in 2014: “I certainly would

not want a constitutional convention. Whoa! Who knows what would come out of it? ...A constitutional convention is a horrible idea.”

3. The process for choosing delegates in Wisconsin is highly partisan and unrepresentative.

Under AB165/SB107, Wisconsin would get seven delegates to such a convention, and they’d all be chosen by Republican leaders!

This is grossly unrepresentative. Essentially half of the citizens of Wisconsin would be totally unrepresented at a constitutional convention!

Please urge your legislators to oppose AJR020/SJR019, AJR021/SJR018, AB165/SB107.

I certainly would not want a constitutional convention. Whoa! Who knows what would come out of it? ...A constitutional convention is a horrible idea.

~Justice Antonin Scalia

Special Interest Follies

The NRA Strikes Again!

About 40 GOP legislators are backing a bill that would allow adults to carry concealed weapons *without* a permit or training in Wisconsin.

The latest bill is backed by the National Rifle Association (NRA), the nation's largest pro-gun lobby.

In Wisconsin, the NRA has spent about \$3.5 million in outside electioneering expenditures to support Scott Walker's 2010 general, 2012 recall and 2014 general elections for governor. Nearly four dozen current GOP legislators have received nearly \$76,000 in NRA campaign contributions and outside election support over the last decade.

Too Much Wisconsin Progress

Wisconsin Progress, a group that recruits and trains Democratic candidates to run for state and local offices, made \$97,340 in contributions to the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee during the latter half of 2016. This appears to exceed the legal contribution limit by a factor of eight.

Under state law, corporations, associations, labor unions and tribes can contribute up to \$12,000 in a calendar year to segregated funds created by legislative campaign committees and political parties. Unlimited contributions are allowed from one political action committee (PAC) to another; from one party committee to another; from a party committee to a PAC; and from an individual to a PAC or party committee. But Wisconsin Progress doesn't appear to fit in any of those that can give unlimited contributions.

We filed complaints on March 21 against the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee and Wisconsin Progress, alleging the contributions violated state campaign finance law.

Influence Peddlers

Our "Influence Peddler of the Month" in March was the **Potato and Vegetable Growers Association**.

Large potato and vegetable growers doled out about \$152,000 in individual and corporate campaign contributions to all legislative and statewide officeholders and candidates in 2016. About four-fifths went to Republicans, and more than half came from nine of the Potato and Vegetable Growers Association's officers and board of directors.

During the 2015-16 legislative session, the association ramped up its lobby spending to about \$183,600, mostly on four bills to restrict state regulation of high-capacity wells. High-capacity wells pump 100,000 gallons or more of water per day, and are used by large vegetable growers, so-called factory farms, food processors and frac-sand mining and operations.

In April, our "Influence Peddler of the Month" went to the **Wisconsin Farm Bureau Association**.

It is the state's largest agriculture organization and a lobbying heavyweight. It too supported the loosening of regulations on high-capacity wells. The Federation spent nearly \$3 million on lobbying legislators and the governor between January 2009 and December 2016. And since 2000, the Federation has spent more than \$1.3 million on outside electioneering activities, like radio and newspaper ads, and about \$306,000 on direct contributions to candidates.

The candidates who received top support from the federation's outside electioneering activities were Walker, about \$213,000; GOP Sen. Sheila Harsdorf, of River Falls, about \$178,000; and Republican Rep. Kathy Bernier, of Lake Hallie, about \$71,000.

The top recipient of direct contributions by the Federation's PAC since 2000 was Walker, at \$65,500.

Lincoln County Backs Nonpartisan Map Drawing

On March 21, the Lincoln County Board, based in Merrill, Wis., voted by 18-4 in favor of a resolution demanding the nonpartisan drawing of fair legislative maps.

The resolution states: “Redistricting to achieve partisan gains is improper, whether it is done by Republicans or Democrats.”

The resolution goes on to say that “the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors insists upon the creation of a nonpartisan procedure for the preparation of legislative and Congressional redistricting plans.”

And it spells out some criteria for doing this, saying that the process “prohibits the consideration of voting patterns, party information, and incumbents’ residence information or demographic information in drawing the maps, except as necessary to ensure minority participation as required by the U.S. Constitution.”

“I was very pleased” with the outcome, says Hans Breitenmoser, one of the Lincoln County Board members who took the lead on the resolution. “Now we want board members in other counties to pass similar resolutions to make it more difficult for our legislators to say this isn’t an important issue and people don’t care about it.”

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign assisted Breitenmoser in this effort.



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