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 A MEMBER OF
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Standing Up to a Bully

Dear Friend,

We spent much of the last couple months trying desperately to defend the administrators over at the Ethics Commission and the Elections Commission.

Brian Bell and Michael Haas had done nothing wrong; in fact, they had the unanimous support of their bipartisan commissioners.

But Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald disregarded that. He was out to get them because they used to work for the old Government Accountability Board, which cooperated with the John Doe II prosecutor who was investigating Scott Walker.

Fitzgerald was acting like a playground bully: He seemed intent on crushing anyone who associated with those who went after his buddies.

On Jan. 23, the Senate voted along party lines to oust both Bell and Haas.

Not since the days of *Tailgunner* Joe McCarthy have we seen a Wisconsin politician so intent on ruining the careers of decent public servants.

Fitzgerald certainly wasn't acting "Wisconsin nice."

We ought to be better than this.

Matt



At a press conference on Jan. 17, leaders of good government groups assailed the attack on the administrators. From the right: Erin Grunze of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Matt Rothschild from the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Chris Ott from the ACLU of Wisconsin, Shauntay Nelson from Wisconsin Voices, and Jay Heck from Common Cause in Wisconsin. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonnell appeared in solidarity.

Direct Donations Jump

A Wisconsin Democracy Campaign review found fundraising by Wisconsin legislative and statewide candidates shot up more than 550 percent in nearly 25 years.

We found that candidate fundraising between the 1989-90 and the 2013-14 general election cycles jumped from \$9.2 million to more than \$61.3 million.

That's an increase of about 565 percent, or nearly seven times the inflation rate during the 25-year period.

One partial explanation for this increase in candidate fundraising was the huge influx of out-of-state contributions from wealthy individuals during the 2011 and 2012 recall elections.

And it appears likely that legislative and statewide candidate fundraising will only escalate this year. This will be the first election when candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general can raise money under sharply higher contribution limits. Those limits were doubled from \$10,000 to \$20,000 a couple of years ago in the disastrous rewrite of our campaign finance law.

Yes, in its majestic equality, this new Wisconsin law allows rich and poor alike to give \$20,000 to their favorite candidate.

The Whiter the District...

Over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign released a one-of-a-kind report on the racial demographics of Wisconsin's electoral districts. That report, based on U.S. Census data, shows Wisconsin residents electing Republican legislators in districts with the highest percentage of white residents, and Democrats in districts with the highest ratio of non-white residents.

In the State Senate, which has 33 legislative districts, Republicans represent 9 of the 11 districts with the largest proportion of whites. Those districts range from 92.5 percent white to 95 percent white. Meanwhile, Democrats were elected in 9 of the 10 Senate districts with the smallest proportion of white residents, ranging from 23.4 percent white to 86 percent white.

In the State Assembly, which has 99 legislative districts, Republicans represent 29 of the 30 districts with the largest proportion of whites. Those districts range from about 93 percent white to 96 percent white. Meanwhile, Democrats were elected in 21 of

the 30 Assembly districts with the smallest proportion of white residents, with those ranging from about 15 percent white to 84.6 percent white.

In the State Senate, 13 of the 27 districts are more than 90 percent white.

In the Assembly, 52 of the 99 districts are more than 90 percent white.

Influence Peddler: WMC gets the award again

Over the last three years, we've been giving out an "Influence Peddler of the Month" award. In January, we decided to hand this highly coveted honor to a group that has already received one of them, and that's Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC).

We gave it to WMC again because it remains the single biggest lobbyist in the State Capitol, it's one of the largest spenders on outside ads, and it's getting its way across the board.

The group secretly raised and spent about \$33 million between January 2006 and December 2017. And it doled most of that money out on broadcast ads to support conservative and Republican candidates and smear their Democratic opponents.

WMC's election spending has been key to the GOP stranglehold on power.

The top beneficiary of WMC's outside election spending has been Walker. The group has shelled out an estimated \$9.5 million to help him reside in the governor's mansion.

In addition to its outside election spending, WMC also funneled direct contributions to candidates through a political action committee (PAC) and a conduit. Since January 2007, WMC PAC and large individual conduit contributions totaled about \$563,000 to legislative and statewide candidates and fundraising committees. All but \$10,850 went to Republicans. (That's 98 percent to the GOP.)

The top recipients of WMC's PAC and conduit contributions were:

Walker, \$149,370;

Republican Assembly Campaign Committee, about \$54,470;

Committee to Elect a Republican Senate, \$47,400;

GOP Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau, \$22,970;

Republican Sen. Tom Tiffany, of Hazelhurst, \$18,780.

Special Interest Follies



Kohler Gives, the DNR Caves

In mid-January, the DNR approved the first in a string of permits sought by a major GOP campaign contributor to build a high-end golf course along the Lake Michigan shore that uses state park land.

Plans for the 247-acre, 18-hole course call for it to use four acres of forest and wetland in the Kohler-Andrae State Park in Sheboygan County for a course maintenance facility and service road. The course is being built by the Kohler Co., whose owner, Herbert V. Kohler, Jr., is a major contributor to Republican Gov. Scott Walker.

Kohler Co. employees contributed \$60,765 between January 2010 and June 2017 to legislative and statewide candidates. Most of the employee contributions—\$48,500—were made by Herbert Kohler himself.

Herbert Kohler contributed \$40,000 to Walker, \$5,000 to GOP Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, \$2,000 to Republican Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau, and \$1,500 to former GOP Sen. Joe Leibham, of Sheboygan, between January 2010 and June 2017.

Still More Anti-Labor Bills

A gang of business, banking, and rightwing special interests are backing GOP bills that would prohibit local governments from passing a variety of labor-related ordinances.

The proposals, Senate Bill 634 and AB748, which were sponsored by Republican Sen. Chris Kapenga, of Delafield, and Rep. Rob Hutton, of Brookfield, would:

- Forbid local governments from setting higher minimum wages for contractors they do business with;
- Prohibit local governments from enforcing employment discrimination standards;

- Prohibit local governments from using labor peace agreements where employers agree not to interfere with attempts by labor unions to organize workers;
- Forbid local governments from setting licensing regulations that are tougher than state standards;
- Prohibit local governments from establishing minimum requirements for employment benefits;
- Forbid local governments from handling wage claims or passing ordinances that prohibit employers from asking about a worker's salary history.

Support for the bill is being led by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce and the rightwing Americans for Prosperity, the secretive outside electioneering group created by Charles and David Koch.

Needy Landlords

The real estate industry is supporting a GOP legislative proposal that would make sweeping changes to landlord-tenant laws. The measure, Senate Bill 639, which is authored by Sens. Frank Lasee, of De Pere, and David Craig, of Big Bend, drew support from the Wisconsin Realtors Association.

The bill would:

- Prohibit local governments from re-inspecting rental properties for 5 years if no violation is detected the first time or if a violation is corrected in a timely manner;
- Allow utilities to provide landlords with information about past bill non-payments by tenants;
- Make renter eviction records available to the public for at least 10 years;
- Limit to 5 days the amount of time courts can shield tenants, such as domestic violence victims, from being evicted.

The real estate industry contributed \$1.4 million between Jan. 2011 and June 2017 to current legislators, including nearly \$1.2 million to Republican lawmakers.

In addition to direct contributions, the Realtors Association and its affiliate, the Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance, have spent an estimated \$835,000 on outside electioneering activities since January 2012 to support Republican legislative and statewide candidates.

Lasee, a former real estate broker, received about \$40,000 in campaign contributions from the real estate industry, and Craig, a real estate agent, received \$4,100 in contributions from real estate interests between January 2011 and June 2017.

The Assembly companion bill, AB771, passed on Jan. 23.

Tackling *Citizens United*

On Jan. 21 at the High Noon Saloon in Madison, South Central Wisconsin United to Amend held an event to (dis)honor the eighth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's horrendous *Citizens United* decision. A crowd of more than 100 enjoyed the birthday cakes and listened to Executive Director Matt Rothschild, who spoke about how *Citizens United* has helped turn the United States into an oligarchy. He quoted from *Citizens United*, saying that the decision contained the two most naïve statements ever written in a Supreme Court ruling.

Here they are:

Independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption.

And, The appearance of influence or access, furthermore, will not cause the electorate to lose faith in our democracy.

What planet were those justices living on?

Fortunately, Wisconsin United to Amend is hard at work on Planet Earth, and more specifically, right here in the Badger State. Its tireless activists have been instrumental in passing resolutions or referendums to overturn *Citizen United* in a whopping 119 communities in Wisconsin.

Rothschild said, "Let's double that to 238!"

To get involved, go to wiuta.org.

Save the Date!

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign Annual Gathering

Thursday, May 3, 2018

Lussier Family Heritage Center
3101 Lake Farm Road

Program information to follow.



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