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## Combating a “Deadly Dogma”

Dear Friend,

At our annual celebration on May 3, we were all treated to a remarkably urgent talk by Duke University historian Nancy MacLean, the author of *Democracy in Chains*.

She likened our current situation to two other perilous periods in U.S. history: the Civil War and the 1930s. In both those periods, she said, “the property supremacists” were trying to prevail over the advocates of democracy.

Today, the Koch Brothers and their big-donor network epitomize those who value property rights over democratic rights, she said.

She warned that the Koch Brothers have been playing “a very patient long game” to “reverse engineer” the democratic gains of the Twentieth Century. “They want to roll back 100 years of reforms,” she said. They want to “chain democracy to make institutions unable to respond to the will of the people.” And “they want citizens to have no faith in government whatsoever.” They want to “undermine the belief that government can modify market failures.”

She called this a “deadly dogma” and warned that it’s gaining ground. She quoted Charles Koch’s boast to his network earlier this year: “We’ve made more progress in the last 5 years than I had in the last 50.”

But she did not despair. She took hope from all the resistance that’s going on, including the students against gun violence, the red-state teachers demanding higher pay, and new groups like Indivisible that are gaining traction.

She also noted, as did I, that a lot of progressive advocacy groups like ours are working harmoniously with each other.

We need a united front to take on the Koch Brothers and their network.

Nothing else will do!



*Matt*

## Special Interest Follies

### Walker Got \$10K from Oxy Heir



Gov. Walker likes to claim he's leading on the issue of opioid addiction. But he received a \$10,000 donation from the heir to Oxycontin

fortune. In 2012, Mortimer Sackler, the son of the owner of Purdue Pharma and a board member himself, wrote that big check to Walker's gubernatorial campaign.

Purdue Pharma and other drug makers are accused of stoking the nation's opioid epidemic in lawsuits filed by more than three-quarters of Wisconsin's counties.

Employees and political action committees from five of these companies contributed about \$39,325 between January 2011 and December 2017 to 15 statewide and legislative candidates and committees. The contributions came from Purdue, Johnson & Johnson, Janssen, Endo, and Allergan. The top recipients of the contributions were:

- Republican Gov. Scott Walker, \$20,800 (including the \$10,000 from Sackler)
- Republican Assembly Campaign Committee, \$6,750
- Committee to Elect a Republican Senate, \$4,500
- State Senate Democratic Committee, \$3,000
- GOP Attorney General Brad Schimel, \$1,025

### WMC's Boast

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) brags that it won victories "too numerous to mention" from the Republican-dominated legislature last session.

The boast appears in the latest issue of WMC's magazine, *Wisconsin Business Voice*. WMC lobbyist Scott Manley highlighted bills approved by majority GOP legislators and signed into law by Republican Gov. Scott Walker including:

Repealing the state's metallic mining moratorium;

Repealing the state's alternative minimum tax, which is generally paid by upper middle class and wealthy taxpayers;

Repealing the personal property tax exemption on machinery, which is expected to save businesses \$74 million a year;

Approving more than \$3 billion in state aid and tax credits to Foxconn.

Manley capped off his article by pledging that WMC will throw its weight around in the upcoming election. "WMC will dedicate considerable effort to supporting the legislators who stood with our members on pro-growth reforms this session," he wrote. "We will also work hard to ensure that the right lawmakers are in place to tackle the unfinished business next session."

### Foxconn and Cronyism

The announcement on May 14 that the Hammes Co. in Milwaukee is the chief planner for the Foxconn project is an example of crony capitalism at its worst.

The Hammes Co. is owned by Jon Hammes, a buddy and big donor of Scott Walker's, who now stands to make more than one hundred million dollars off the \$4.5 billion taxpayer-funded boondoggle.

Hammes is Walker's campaign finance chairman for his current reelection bid.

And he was finance chairman for Walker's hapless presidential campaign.

He and his wife, Ann, have given about \$25,000 to Walker's campaigns for governor over the last eight years.

In 2015, a company registered in the name of their son, J. Patrick Hammes, and sharing an address with the Hammes Co., gave \$150,000 to Unintimidated PAC, one of Walker's super PAC's during his presidential quest, according to Jessie Opoien of *The Capital Times*.

Jon Hammes has also given about \$20,000 to the Republican Party of Wisconsin over the last 18 years.

And Jon and Ann Hammes have given about \$285,000 to the Republican National Committee over the last 14 years.

Now, for his dutiful service to Walker and the Republican Party, Hammes gets to cash in big time.

The Hammes deal is the latest -- and the most grotesque -- example of how Scott Walker has turned the state of Wisconsin into an ATM for his pals and donors, an ATM full of our tax dollars.

This is not democracy. This is thievery.

(This op-ed by Matt Rothschild was reprinted by *The Capital Times*, *Urban Milwaukee*, and *WisPolitics*.)

## The Assault on Local Democracy

In Wisconsin, the enshrinement of local democracy was part of the Progressive Movement's agenda. The legislature passed a home rule bill in 1911, and it was signed into law by Governor Francis McGovern, who was a La Follette Republican. A year later, however, the Wisconsin Supreme Court threw the law out, so advocates of home rule set about amending the state Constitution, which they achieved in 1924.

Since then, the courts and the legislature and governors of both parties have curtailed local control.

But Scott Walker, Scott Fitzgerald, and Robin Vos have taken the assault on local democracy to new and dangerous heights.

They've passed more than 160 bills that interfere with local self-governance: And this from the political party that championed local control!

*Scott Walker, Scott Fitzgerald, and Robin Vos have taken the assault on local democracy to new and dangerous heights.*

Here are some of the ways they've curtailed local democracy:

- They prohibited local governments from requiring employers to offer paid sick leave, overturning a path-breaking Milwaukee ordinance.
- They passed numerous anti-labor laws that prohibit local governments from negotiating benefits (Act10) with unions, or from requiring prevailing wages on contracts, or, most recently, from establishing higher employment benefits or living wages on local government contracts.
- They passed a slew of pro-landlord bills, including one this year that prohibits local governments from inspecting properties for their first 8 years and from re-inspecting properties that had problems but fixed them, for another 5 years.
- They passed a law prohibiting local governments from imposing their own insurance requirements on pipeline companies.
- They passed a law curbing local control over the siting of cell phone towers.
- They passed a law prohibiting local governments from forcing banks to sell "zombie" properties in a timely fashion.
- They passed a law prohibiting local governments from enacting tougher shoreland zoning laws than the state.
- They passed a law prohibiting communities from banning or restricting bow and arrow and crossbow hunting.

- They even passed a law prohibiting local governments from using their own workforce on construction jobs over \$100,000 or working cooperatively with other local governments, as in sharing heavy equipment on projects over \$100,000.

## Influence Peddler of the Month

Our **May** Influence Peddler of the Month was the **Greater Wisconsin Committee (GWC)**, which has spent more on outside electioneering activities in legislative and statewide races than any other special interest group to date: an estimated \$32 million from January 2010 through the 2018 spring elections.

GWC gets most of its electioneering cash from Democratic ideological groups and unions.

The GWC's top Wisconsin contributors to its 527 group, the Greater Wisconsin Political Fund, are:

Wisconsin Education Association Council, the state's largest teacher's union, \$1.2 million;

We Are Wisconsin Political Fund, a group of state and national labor unions mostly active during the 2011 and 2012 recall elections, \$893,500;

Lynde B. Uihlein, of Milwaukee, director of the Brico Fund and a Milwaukee philanthropist who backs Democratic and women's causes and candidates, \$331,000.

Our **June** Influence Peddler was none other than the **American Federation for Children**, the pro-school-voucher group founded by Betsy DeVos, who is now Donald Trump's Education Secretary. DeVos once said: "I have decided to stop taking offense at the suggestion that we are buying influence. Now I simply concede the point. We do expect some things in return."

Her return on her investment in Wisconsin has been huge. The group has spent more than \$6.5 million on outside electioneering from 2010 through 2017 to help elect a Republican majority in the legislature. State spending on school vouchers during this period has totaled \$1.2 billion.

The American Federation for Children's senior adviser in Wisconsin is Scott Jensen, the disgraced former Speaker of the Assembly, who pleaded to a misdemeanor in the Caucus Scandal that rocked the State Capitol in 2001.



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## How Not to Burn Out

*Words of Wisdom from the late environmentalist Edward Abbey:*

“Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast, a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much: You will outlive the bastards.”



### Look for Us at Farmers' Market

Once or twice a month, we'll be at the Dane County Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings ranging from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Our table is across from the Park Hotel on the southwest corner of the Square. Please come pay us a visit. We look forward to seeing you.

### Please Donate!

We need your support to keep campaigning for a fully functioning democracy, where everyone has an equal voice. As you'll see, we've tucked in a card and a return envelope, so please send us a donation, which is tax-deductible when you itemize. The whole staff thanks you!

