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Feb/Mar 2019

Edition No. 113

www.wisdc.org

Citizens United and MLK

Dear Friend,

This year, the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2009 *Citizens United* decision fell on the same date, Jan. 21, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. This gave us an opportunity, at a press conference in the state capitol, to connect the dots and to show that campaign finance is a civil rights issue.

As I'm sure you know, the *Citizens United* decision let corporations and other groups spend unlimited amounts of money to elect the candidates of their choice. It claimed that "independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption"! And it based its decision on previous Supreme Court rulings that said corporations were persons and that money was speech.

But Dr. King himself noted that corporations aren't persons and don't deserve the rights of flesh-and-blood human beings.

Bill Franks of the NAACP of Dane County, and a board member of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, made the point at our press conference that working people and most people of color don't have the means to compete with the SuperPACs and their wealthy donors. As a result, their voices tend to be drowned out and their interests neglected by the people who get elected.

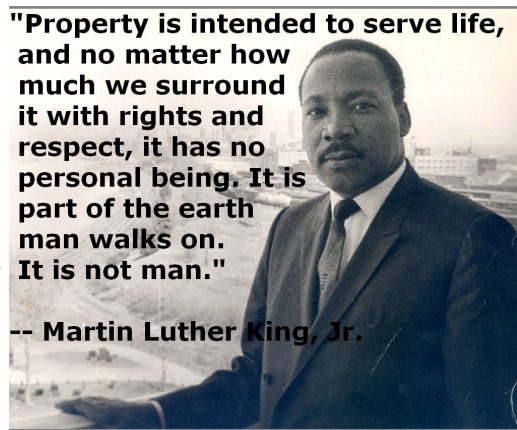
At the press conference, Rep. Lisa Subeck and Sen. Dave Hansen unveiled their resolution to bring an advisory referendum before the people of Wisconsin to overturn *Citizens United*. It would ask us whether we want to amend the U.S. Constitution to say that corporations aren't persons and money isn't speech and "to allow all Americans to have an equal say in our democracy."

Please contact your own legislators to co-sponsor and support these resolutions.

We simply can't have Dr. King's "beloved community" until we strip corporations of constitutional rights.

"Property is intended to serve life, and no matter how much we surround it with rights and respect, it has no personal being. It is part of the earth man walks on. It is not man."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.



Matt

Good News on Fair Maps!

The vast majority of Wisconsinites oppose gerrymandering and want nonpartisan redistricting. That's what emerges from the latest Marquette Law School poll, which was released on January 24.

According to the poll, 72 percent of Wisconsin voters want a nonpartisan commission to draw the legislative and congressional district maps instead of the elected officials. This sentiment is strong across political viewpoints, with 63 percent of Republicans agreeing with it.

It has been propelled by the blatant rigging of the maps by the Republican leadership in 2011. A recent example of how successfully the Republicans rigged the maps came on November 6, when Democrats won 54 percent of the votes cast in Assembly races but Republicans kept 63 percent of the seats in the Assembly.

The will of the Wisconsin public is clear:
No more map-rigging!

Record Spending in Gov. Race

Spending in the 2018 governor's race set a record of more than \$93 million.

Former GOP Gov. Scott Walker and his running mate, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, spent nearly \$36.2 million, while Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and his running mate, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, spent \$10.8 million. (Other candidates, in the Democratic primary, spent about \$6 million more.)

Independent expenditures and phony issue ad groups spent \$40.6 million. Groups that supported Walker and Kleefisch spent about \$21.5 million, while groups that supported Evers and Barnes doled out more than \$18.6 million.

Five groups spent more than \$1 million in the governor's race. Those groups were:

Democratic Governors Association (DGA), more than \$13.4 million.

Republican Governors Association (RGA), more than \$11.1 million.

Americans for Prosperity, more than \$8 million. That's the conservative group created by billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch.

Greater Wisconsin Committee, about \$1.5 million. That's a Democratic group that is backed by union and rich ideological contributors.

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), \$1.2 million. That's the state's largest business group.



Influence Peddlers of the Month

The **National Rifle Association** received our January award. In Wisconsin, the NRA spent just over \$1 million in 2018 on electioneering activities in legislative and statewide elections. It was one of only a handful of powerful special interests to surpass the seven-figure mark for election spending last year.

The pro-gun group has been a dependable backer of Republican and conservative candidates in Wisconsin state elections for years.

The group's support for Republican legislative and statewide candidates paid off handsomely over the last eight years, as the NRA got what it wanted, including concealed carry; elimination of the 48-hour waiting period to buy a gun; and legal protections for people who shoot trespassers inside a home, business or vehicle, also known as the "castle doctrine."

In February, our award went to a new outside electioneering group, **High Ground Political Fund** which made first-time independent expenditures totaling \$715,480 in six state Senate races.

High Ground's election spending was funded by two contributions totaling \$810,000 in September and October from a federal SuperPAC called PACRONYM.

PACRONYM raised \$2.4 million and spent \$2.3 million in the 2017-18 election cycle, according to Federal Election Commission records. The SuperPAC's largest contributor, at \$2 million, was another new national Democratic group called the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, headed by former Attorney General Eric Holder, which spent \$225,000 in Wisconsin state elections last year.

High Ground Political Fund has the same address as Nation Consulting, a campaign consulting and lobbying firm headed by Thad Nation. Nation was an aide to former Democratic Govs. Jim Doyle in Wisconsin and Frank O'Bannon in Indiana.

Special Interest Follies

ATC Plays Both Sides

Senior executives of two of the companies building a controversial powerline in southwestern Wisconsin have been greasing the skids in Madison.

The companies are American Transmission Co. (ATC), of Waukesha, and Dairyland Power, of La Crosse.

Top officials and other employees of ATC and Dairyland Power contributed about \$338,300 between January 2010 and December 2017.

Top recipients of those contributions were:

Republican Assembly Campaign Committee,
about \$71,800

Committee to Elect a Republican Senate,
\$57,600

Former GOP Gov. Scott Walker, \$38,825

State Senate Democratic Committee, about
\$38,100

Assembly Democratic Campaign
Committee, about \$24,800

Top individual contributors from ATC were:

Mike Rowe, of Pewaukee, president,
\$18,050

Randall Satterfield, of Fitchburg, executive
vice president, \$16,700

Michael Hofbauer, of Waukesha, vice
president, \$15,050.

Top individual contributors from Dairyland Power Cooperative were:

Brian Rude, of Coon Valley, vice president,
\$6,825

William Berg, of La Crosse, president,
\$5,600

John West, of La Crosse, information
technology director, about \$3,100.

The Tavern Lobby's Sway

Renewed efforts to criminalize first-offense drunk driving in Wisconsin face tough prospects despite support from a bipartisan group of state legislators and a new Democratic governor.

That's because, say observers, drinking beer and booze has long been part of the state's culture, and the Tavern League of Wisconsin has some

serious sway.

GOP Sen. Alberta Darling, of River Hills, and Republican Rep. Jim Ott, of Mequon, are reintroducing a measure that would make first-offense drunk driving a misdemeanor. The bill would allow offenders to have their record expunged if they do not commit a second offense for five years.

But Mothers Against Drunk Driving lobbyist Frank Harris says GOP legislative leaders would have to back the bill, and that "depends on if the Tavern League would allow them to do it."

At least officially, the Tavern League has been neutral on past efforts to increase drunk-driving penalties. But it's not been shy about opening the spigot.

During a five-year period from January 2013 through December 2017, the Tavern League's political action committee, corporation, and conduit contributed \$296,355 to Wisconsin legislative and statewide candidates and legislative campaign committees. The top recipients of those contributions were:

Republican Assembly Campaign Committee,
\$34,500

Committee to Elect a Republican Senate,
\$32,500

GOP Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald,
of Juneau, about \$27,800

Republican Rep. Rob Summerfield, of
Bloomer, \$14,200

Republican Senate President Roger Roth, of
Appleton, \$11,470

Diane Hendricks in the Top 100

One Wisconsinite made it into the top 100 donors in federal races in the last election cycle, and that's Diane Hendricks of ABC Supply in Beloit.

She came in at #34 in the rankings put out by OpenSecrets.org, which tracks money in federal races.

All told, she shelled out \$4,545,200 to Republican candidates, parties, committees, and PACs, with 70 percent of that going to Leah Vukmir's SuperPAC, which was called Wisconsin Next PAC, in Vukmir's unsuccessful race against Sen. Tammy Baldwin.



203 South Paterson Street, Suite 100
Madison, WI 53703-3689
608 255-4260; www.wisd.org

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Baraboo and America in the Age of Trump

(These are some of the remarks Matt Rothschild gave on Dec. 4 at a talk at UW-Baraboo.)

“It’s always nice to be back in Baraboo, and to see so many friends and wonderful activists here. I’m grateful to those of you who’ve come tonight who are concerned, as I am, about what’s going on in our country right now, and what’s been going on in Baraboo. I’m not here to single out Baraboo. That picture of the high school students giving the Nazi salute could have been taken almost anywhere in America, I’m afraid. That doesn’t make it any better. But it is to say that Donald Trump has given a permission slip to anyone and everyone to be out in the open with their most racist, anti-Semitic, and bigoted views. It would be a mistake try to put this incident behind you without first coming to grips with the rise of anti-Semitism and the rise of white supremacy that this incident reflects. And that’s all it does. It doesn’t reflect Baraboo. It reflects America in the Age of Trump.”

Please Mark Your Calendar

The Big Share returns on Tuesday, March 5!



Community Shares of Wisconsin organizes this online day of giving to support the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and 69 other local non-profits working to build just and sustainable

communities across the state. Visit thebigshare.org and donate online on March 5.

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign Annual Meeting Thursday, May 16, 2019

We will once again hold our annual gathering at the Dane County Parks Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Road, in Madison from 5:30-8:00 p.m. Please come and hear Matt and other speakers, and enjoy the food!